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ABSTRACT

Information for second language teachers in Great Britain, also applicable to the situation in the United States, is presented. The material is organized as a response to the availability of second language instruction to students across all ability levels. In addition, issues related to new developments in theory-into-practice (such as the threshold level, the notional-functional approach, and the unit-credit system) are addressed. Four articles are devoted to curriculum development, with emphasis on setting realistic goals in the light of widespread student failure and loss of interest. Additional articles are devoted to each of the basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Finally, two articles discuss instruction at the advanced secondary level in terms of class activities and literary works for class use. (JB)

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teaching languages in today's schools

Edited by D G Smith

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Preface

In 1972, CILT published a short book, now out of print, entitled Modern Languages Across the Ability Range. At that time, the development of comprehensive education was still somewhat patchy, and the success of the book suggests that it was of help to teachers as comprehensive education spread, and with it the extension of foreign language teaching to a wider ability range. This present publication, appearing almost nine years later, seeks to condense experience gained during that period, in which most parts of England and Wales have developed comprehensive systems of secondary organisation, and, like the earlier publication, it takes as its first premise the assumption that all pupils should be given the chance to begin a foreign language.

All the contributors to the present publication have been intimately involved with teaching languages in comprehensive schools. The aim has been to make their contributions as practically based as possible. For this reason it has been felt better in some cases to make descriptive rather than theoretical statements. The four foreign language skills - listening, speaking, reading, writing - have been treated separately, in full realisation that such separation is artificial. The skills almost always interpenetrate - speaking involves listening, writing involves reading, and so on. This necessarily arbitrary separation has been made in an attempt simply to make some descriptive statements possible. In so few pages, it has not been possible to include very much detailed methodological content, nor in some cases much depth of example. However, a bibliography is provided which gives sources for the references indicated by numbers in the text, and a few suggestions for further reading on some of the topics treated. The aim has been to refer only to books or articles of easy access to teachers.

It should be noted that throughout the publication, examples are given referring to French. This is not intended to minimise the significance of other languages. It is partly a factor of space, and partly a recognition of the fact that French is the foreign language with which most pupils in the United Kingdom begin their language studies.

DGS

1. Introduction

David Smith

In selective systems of secondary education, roughly 20% of children aged 11 - those who went to grammar school - were given foreign language instruction. Relatively few secondary modern schools had foreign language teachers. As secondary schools have reorganised along comprehensive lines, so children of all abilities have found themselves in schools with foreign language teachers. One of the most urgent questions posed in such schools has concerned the extent to which, and the methodology by which, foreign language teaching might be made available to all pupils, at least in the first two or three years, before the option system begins to operate. Present indications are that about 85% of pupils now begin a foreign language.

There are a number of practical difficulties caused by not offering languages to all pupils. In streamed or setted schools, movement between sets or between streams is made complex or impossible if pupils do not have a common curriculum pattern. In unstreamed schools, with mixed ability classes, it is difficult (or often unthinkable) to exclude some children from foreign language lessons; if this is done, in fact, the same problems can arise as in streamed or setted schools.

In any case, it is difficult to imagine what criteria would be used for excluding some children from language classes. The few predictive tests which exist are unreliable, and none of them claims to be able to identify with any high degree of accuracy which children beginning a foreign language will experience some success in learning it. Measured IQ alone is an equally unreliable indicator:[1] any other form of selection for foreign language learning appears to be based on little more than hunch.

In any case, the development of comprehensive schools has coincided with social and technological developments which make separate curricula difficult to defend.[2] Indeed, such schools are founded on the belief that in a flexible organisation, pupils can develop their potential to a degree previously not expected. Within such a philosophy, it is difficult to imagine any area of the curriculum being offered in the early years only to selected pupils.

Moreover, there are good educational reasons why foreign languages should be offered to all pupils, but it is not possible to state these until an attempt has been made to define precisely the contribution of foreign languages to the curriculum.

Pressures of time on the curriculum are intense. Two things are certain:

(1) Foreign languages have no more important a place in the curriculum than any other subject for which an equal educational claim can be made.

(2) Foreign languages have no place at all unless their teachers adduce valid educational justifications which hold up under argument, and unless pupils at the end of the foreign language course can be shown clearly to be 'better educated' in ways to which the foreign language course can equally clearly be shown to have made a significant contribution.

Children entering secondary schools in 1980 will still be in vigorous middle age in 2015, and may still be working as late as 2030. We know little of what the world will be like then, but as it is the task of schools to prepare pupils for the moral and physical world in which they will spend their adult life, some attempt must be made by teachers to foresee the nature of that world. (Many of today's language teachers will still be teaching at the turn of the century. They, too, must adjust their teaching to changing needs).

It is certain that the world will become increasingly populated and technologically increasingly sophisticated. Both of these factors will make it more dangerous, and we can thus predicate certain essential traits for those living then. These would include tolerance for other people (our cheeks and jowls will be closer even than now); sympathy for other ways of thought and behaviour; a high degree of patience, self-restraint, and selflessness; willingness to be hospitable to others, and to share one's resources; the imagination to allow that traditional (or national) systems of organisation may not be the most appropriate in a different social organisation; adaptable, inventive, enquiring minds, in which retraining and éducation permanente in its many forms are seen as normal; minds which are combative in a positive sense.

There is nothing new in requiring education to produce people like this, but given the implications of changes likely to occur in the lifetimes of our pupils, it is worth stressing the often neglected point that, in education, process is a component part of the product. Indeed, process may be more important than product. All of us forget the great bulk of what we learn in school - education is what remains when the forgetting has been done.

Modern linguists often claim that their subject 'widens horizons', without ever precisely defining what they mean. There is no doubt that this can result from effective modern language teaching, but it is important to realise that modern language teaching alone cannot produce the desirable characteristics concerned.

Nevertheless, the modern language classroom can give an important different dimension to social learning. It is difficult to teach acceptance of different habits, customs, attitudes, or of potentially different social organisation as compared to the home country, where the context is hypothetical. Foreign countries offer clear factual examples, not of every type of organisation, but of patterns which exist and which work (including some which do not work very well). However, the context is important; transposition of cross-cultural contexts cannot be assumed to be successful - witness the attempts to establish Westminster style parliaments in emergent countries.

In fact, it is debatable whether within the classroom most foreign language learners are encouraged to grapple long enough with the very complex nature of such learning. More able pupils spend less time on such study, paradoxically, than the less able. Most course books additionally have very little authentic French-ness about them. Even those most frequently used usually sacrifice anything beyond simple surface meaning for the sake of structure and lexis.

Furthermore, teaching about foreign countries seems to consist mainly of factual transmission. Too little importance is attached to the making of inferences based on facts. As it happens, facts are unimportant, and can be looked up or otherwise obtained. What they tell us about the world is much more important.

Justification for modern languages in the curriculum goes beyond the mental widening discussed above, but such work has been stressed precisely because it is often undervalued. Several other features justify foreign languages on the timetable of a secondary school. Let us look at just three of them:

(1) Foreign language tuition is the only item in the curriculum which allows a foreign language to be learned. It uniquely offers a key to a range of experiences inaccessible to those who are monolingual. Being in Italy and speaking Italian provides an experience unlike that available to a visitor without the language. Reading a notice or a newspaper in French has the same features. Speaking to Spanish people in their own language, whatever country they may be in, is an experience different from that available to most people. In brief, foreign language acquisition liberates pupils from the constraints of their normal mother tongue existence. As the essence of education can be said to be learning from experiences provided or otherwise grasped, foreign language study clearly has an important role to play.

Learning tolerance, widening horizons to the fullest extent, requires that you get under the skin of the foreigner. It is possible, of course, to rely upon the foreigners' knowledge of your own language, but this limits contact with them to those areas they are able or willing to deal with in your language. In observing their country, it is also possible to learn from what springs to the senses. To get under the skin, however, you need proficiency in the language.

(2) Ability to manipulate a foreign language seems likely to have an effect also on the student's attitude to language in general, including the mother tongue. It can also extend the experiences and conclusions drawn from study of the mother tongue. It requires pupils to notice elements of the foreign language never consciously considered in the mother tongue (adjectives, segments of the verb, stress patterns, for instance), and requires them to make sounds not previously part of their conscious repertoire. In this way it can lead them to realise that language is a variable system of codes, with no necessary one-to-one relationships across linguistic and cultural frontiers. Those philosophers of education (the majority) who accord modern language study a place in the curriculum, often stress the way in which it can contribute to the 'symbolic' education of pupils. Like mathematics, the foreign language is a tightly organised, infinitely expressive symbol system, although what it expresses is qualitatively different from the field covered by mathematics. Language acquisition is one of the ways by which man overcomes the apparent meaninglessness of the universe.[3]

Teachers still seem unsure by what methodology they can achieve this end. It seems likely, however, that by requiring close attention to sounds, word patterns and functions, foreign language learning can increase sensitivity to language. Although in some cases use of the mother tongue may resemble the use of a battering ram, the requirements of the foreign language tend towards use of it rather as a fine cutting tool. Intuition suggests that this can lead to a closer attention to the mother tongue. At an advanced level, for instance, it seems likely that close attention to accurate translation, an attempt to grasp the reasons for the effectiveness of an author's style, or the realisation of the potential effect of various word orders, registers, or non-verbal language behaviour (gesture etc) may transfer closer attention to the same areas of interest in the mother tongue.

Some writers object that the best way of attending to the mother tongue is by direct operation in it, but experience in remedial education suggests that diminishing returns can operate; just as, although spelling and counting are important, one would not suggest that a timetable should be built around them alone. Furthermore, some people have distinct predispositions towards foreign language acquisition, and for them the language can become a vehicle for study and appreciation beyond its immediate context.

(3) For learners with such predispositions acquisition of one language makes that of subsequent foreign languages easier. A word of caution is necessary here, however. Although a case has been made for the inclusion of the first foreign language in the curriculum, additional reasons will have to be found for the inclusion of second/third foreign languages. The curriculum is too crowded to allow us simply to put in more of the same. The reason must be unique gift. Some children can gain potential benefit from studying two languages, to such an extent that more of the same can be judged to give positive gains in measurable ways. Children with such capacities form a rather small proportion of the age group, however. It seems unlikely that they would exceed the 20% of the age group which would have gone to grammar schools, for instance. Judging from the numbers who eventually filter through to public examination level, this figure is probably nearer 10%. Some writers claim that even elementary study of several foreign languages is beneficial since it allows pupils to extrapolate across languages. I believe that the case here is yet to be proven.

* * *

As the provision of foreign languages to all pupils has increased, it has become ever more apparent that in offering a common curriculum to all pupils, there should be no expectation that all pupils will reach the same level of attainment, or even that they will always be taught the same material. Disappointment over the performance of some pupils - particularly the less able - has resulted from failure on the part of teachers to establish realistic objectives, and within them attainable short-term goals. To say that all the children in a year group will learn French is not to imply that all will remember the same things, nor that all will notice the same linguistic phenomena; that all will be able to learn in the same way, want to say the same thing, nor learn at the same speed. It is unrealistic to expect identical levels of performance across a wide ability range, and teachers should ask only for maximum effort, having established a variable range of criteria against which performance can be matched, objectively by themselves, and subjectively by their pupils.

This suggests that clearly within the departmental syllabus, and more explicitly still within the weekly or termly planning of foreign language teachers, provision must be made for different groups within the same year to be working at varied paces, towards varied defined short-term objectives, using varied course materials, with varied terminal objectives in view. These longer-term objectives may be defined in different ways, as Duncan Sidwell and Eric Garner show later. They may be based on progress in all the language skill areas, but at varying levels; on particular skill areas to the exclusion of others; on a more or less wide extension of the same type of language activity. The main thing is that they should be defined, so that, at whatever time an individual pupil terminates his or her course, both teacher and pupil should be able to show the benefits which have been obtained from the foreign language course.

Language teachers have usually seen objectives as long-term. At the end of five years, the pupils (actually about 20% of the age range) will take 'O' level. This is one kind of objective. However, as Roy Dunning shows, the 'O' level examinations are always norm-referenced and used for purposes of comparing one pupil to another. All that they tell a pupil is that at the end of five years of study he or she has been very successful, fairly successful, or not at all successful as compared to other un-named pupils in the country. It would be more enlightening for pupils, for their future employers, and certainly for the great majority of pupils who never take a public examination, if some clearer indication of success were available in the form of criterion-referenced measures. These could be produced within the department for internal use, and by groups of schools or by an LEA for a more objectively 'respectable' outside purpose.

Criterion-referenced assessments would indicate, for instance, that the pupil is now able to perform satisfactorily in certain areas of language usage, and in certain modes. For instance, he or she is able to speak about himself/herself and his or her family (but perhaps not always write the same material), that he or she is able to speak and write about his or her own likes, dislikes and preferences, and so on. The availability of such objective statements about language usage would be more meaningful than 'grade 3 'O' level, Board X, syllabus 1', and in the dark hours of winter with 3Z might help to persuade teacher and pupil alike that real progress is being made.

The elaboration of clear statements of this kind has occupied the Council of Europe in its work on the Threshold Level, to which several contributors refer, and continues to guide the work of the many groups throughout the United Kingdom which have set out since about 1977 to produce graded syllabuses and examinations. At the time of preparation of this paper, it was considered premature to describe these in too much affirmative detail, but CILT holds records of work completed which can be made available on enquiry, and has published a book entitled Graded objectives in modern languages.[4] Van Ek's book The threshold level for modern language learning in schools[5] is an exceedingly useful introduction to the subject, and Roy Dunning's contribution to this present volume also examines some of the principles involved.

Even with a fairly homogeneous set, some differentiation of objectives may be necessary, and it certainly will be necessary across a mixed-ability class or a full year-group. In the case of schools which wish to set, specific performance criteria are obviously essential. In the past, setting (which is predictive) has usually been based on tests which were essentially tests of mastery of material acquired: generally, such tests asked pupils to perform primarily in the written mode. This slim volume contains no specific chapter on testing, as it was felt to be too complex a topic. However, several contributors refer to the importance of assessment, and it is clear that over a school year, differentiated objectives imply differential testing for mastery. If such tests are to be used for planning further teaching, or for setting, they must also be made into reliable indicators of potential performance. In orally-inclined courses, they must surely have, too, an important oral component.

* * *

Since the recognition of the importance of differentiated objectives, several types of strategy have been employed, particularly in relation to the curriculum for the slow learner. The early comprehensive schools were established at about the time that audio-visual language teaching became widespread. As the essence of the audio-visual methodology was to present speech well in advance of writing, and as it was believed that less able children have trouble with writing, it became common to restrict the less able classes to the oral component, and to give them very little opportunity to read or write in the foreign language. In this way, slower learners often progressed through the audio-visual course more slowly than their faster peers, but the intention was that they should cover the same kinds of material.

This approach has several disadvantages, which can be summarised in the tendency for it to bore pupils. Their progress consequently becomes slower, and this is cumulative. Often by the end of the first two years of learning, such little progress has been made through the course book that pupils have also become bored with the relative triviality of the situations they have been asked to talk about. Not uncommonly, slower learners at the end of two years may have covered only the material which top sets covered in the first term of the first year. Often, the language content has not been developed much beyond the content of the course itself, so that language learnt commonly refers only to imaginary families, in imagined contexts.

Furthermore, many pupils are hampered in their memorising by the unavailability of the printed word. Chapter 7 by the staff of De Lisle School suggests that carefully planned written work can reinforce oral work, although of course there is a risk, especially in the early stages, and especially with less able pupils, of pronunciation errors resulting from the influence of the spelling of the foreign words.

Under the kind of organisation of work described above, and with slower pupils making such slow progress through the course, many teachers are worried that by the time pupils opt to abandon foreign language study (as up to 70% of them seem to do at the latest by the end of the third year of learning), they have learnt little which they can realistically be expected to use in everyday contact with native speakers of the language.

It is not possible to state accurately all the characteristics of all slow learners, but often some of the following broad characteristics apply, to the children in about the lowest 30% of the linguistic ability range.[6] They

- have a relatively short concentration span
- get bored rather quickly and lose motivation

- appear to have little long term memory, and little short-term memory. If a task is beyond them, they develop 'mental dazzle', a mixture of confusion and panic
- are able to a far less degree even than more able children to understand grammatical terminology
- have very poor ability to make analogies
- are unwilling to recognise the importance of fine differences of grammar and pronunciation
- have poor listening discrimination
- have short term ambitions
- exhibit a desire for immediate satisfaction of their enquiries, demanding immediate understanding of material presented
- demand material patently and immediately relevant to themselves
- are unwilling to be adventurous in their use of the mother tongue, or to use words in new situations. Often one feels that they do not wish to appear too literate[7]
- need a very great variety of teaching materials, teaching techniques, and subject matter.

At the very bottom of the linguistic ability range, children may not in fact understand instructions in their mother tongue, even though these instructions are simplified, nor be able to retain three or four instructions grouped together. Some may not be able to cope with books intended for children with a reading age 4 years below their own chronological age. Some will have difficulty with letter formation. Some will have severe difficulties with spelling. Their writing may be either very slow, or very fast but inaccurate. Their concept formation may be very poor, and they may find difficulty, for instance, in understanding the concept of distance. Many may be unfamiliar with even their own region, beyond the confines of one area of their town.

For children exhibiting such characteristics, it is arguable that the organisation (and to some extent the content) of their language course should be different from that of the more recognisably 'academic' child. A slowed-down version of the academic child's course does not always seem appropriate. Many teachers also interpret such characteristics as a strong argument for relatively early setting according to interest, motivation, and ability; other teachers claim that by retaining mixed ability sets, problems of behaviour resulting from poor learning characteristics can be overcome.

Given such problems, many teachers have included non-linguistic background studies in the course for less able children, in an attempt to hold their interest, and in the belief that such studies have cultural value.

Here also, problems have been encountered. Often, progressively, the background studies displace the language work or even totally replace it. As the one unique feature of the foreign language course's contribution to the curriculum is that it gives access to a range of experiences accessible only through possession of the language itself, many teachers are worried by this tendency. The tendency also reflects, in some cases, an attempt to overcome discipline problems. Whilst such motives can be appreciated, three caveats must be entered. First, that uninterested pupils may be rejecting no more than the kind of language teaching offered to them, and might accept a different kind. Secondly, that unless the background studies can be shown to make a clearly definable contribution to the child's education, they are open to charges of time filling. Thirdly, the background studies course can easily include elements which will be met elsewhere in the curriculum. This danger is particularly apparent in the case of European Studies courses, which mushroomed in the early 1970s, again partly as an attempt to involve lower ability youngsters in years 3-5 of the secondary school. Such courses, which usually attempt to provide more breadth than the background courses offered in the lower school, point to the need for heads of department in particular to be aware of the syllabus content of subjects other than their own. Without discussion at head of department level of the curriculum offered across the school, it is difficult to ensure that pupils receive a coherent and balanced diet, and that wasteful repetition is avoided.

Coherence is important too, within any background studies component, and it is worrying to notice at times an apparent unrelatedness between topics treated. Typically, these might include, for instance: monuments of Paris, French police, wine and cheese, travel in France, Joan of Arc, Napoleon, tourism. Not only is there the danger here that the only common link between the topics is that they are more or less related to France, but also that the topic might be unrelated to the language work being done (if any).

In particular, teachers need to ask whether the facts which they are teaching are truly important, and whether topics should be chosen less for their apparent self-containedness than for the light which discussion of them can throw upon the world in general. For instance, one of the striking things about travel in some countries is the high cost of motorway tolls. As a fact, this is interesting, but more important discussions resulting from such a feature would desirably include, for instance, the reasons for such charges, whether they are worthwhile given the high costs of collection, where the money goes, how we in Britain manage without tolls, whether we would do well to introduce them, what the effect would be of introducing them here, the decisions involved in planning motorway systems, their advantages and disadvantages, their relevance to the size of country. From such discussions of each element of their course, teachers could realistically hope that their pupils would become more open-minded. Simply learning that tolls exist, however, will not achieve that end.

Again, here, teachers of French have common cause with teachers of humanities and social studies, from whom they might have something to learn, or to whom they may have something to offer. The compartmentalisation of secondary teachers into subject specialisms, water-tight and apart, is something for which it is difficult to see any real logic, and which contributes towards an ossification of the curriculum.[2]

Language teachers could obtain useful help easily from their colleagues on the methodology of teaching less able children, and in particular on the use of resource materials for teaching background studies. The convenient description often employed to define a less able pupil is that his reading age will be two years at least below his chronological age. Some twelve year olds will have difficulty in reading items easily accessible to many nine and ten year olds. Various simple formulae exist for calculating the readability of texts.[8]

Readability should be a major factor affecting choice of materials. Books which are too difficult can be simplified into separate resource documents. If this is not done, pupils run the risk of not understanding what they are reading, and/or of indulging in empty verbalism, copying wholesale from books without realising what the words mean.[9]

Similarly, teachers may need to modify their own use of English to ensure that pupils do fully understand what is being said to them. It is easy to use mature 'middle class' language without realising the need for the listener to be equally verbally mature. This is no doubt one of the reasons why many people have great difficulty in completing official forms, such as applications for a driving licence.[10]

Some teachers spend less time than others on background studies with less able pupils. Few seem to spend as much time on them with more able pupils, which is paradoxical, since the need in both types of pupils would seem logically to be about the same. Some teachers differentiate their objectives along more linguistic lines by concentrating on certain skills - no longer only on the oral, but also on listening or reading comprehension, these being arguably the most 'usable' features of the foreign language. Peter Wheeldon gives examples in his chapter of types of listening comprehension activity (relevant to all levels of ability, although some teachers may wish to give particular emphasis to listening comprehension with some types of pupils).

A further approach to differentiation of objectives, set out in Pat Brockman's chapter on speaking, and implicit in Roy Dunning's contribution, is to set varied objectives within any one unit of work, not by expecting less able pupils to perform at a lower level, but by allowing able pupils to extend themselves. Some teachers believe that this can be done within mixed ability classes, even up to the fourth or fifth year of learning. Others, certainly the majority, believe that language teaching is more efficiently organised, differing capacities more easily catered for, and differentiated objectives more easily attained, if setting takes place within the first two years of learning.

However this may be, it is possible to envisage an approach to syllabus planning for foreign languages which sets differentiated objectives by the nature of the organisation of the language selected to be taught. As Duncan Sidwell and Eric Garner point out, the traditional selection of language to be taught (as in practically all published courses) is based on grammatically ordered hierarchies. This type of organisation of material worked to some degree over a long period with some of the most able pupils, although by no means all the pupils selected to enter grammar schools showed high foreign language skills at the end of their course. However, it has some serious disadvantages.

Subconsciously, it is conceived as a five year course. Its cumulative nature means that it takes a long time for realistic conversational ability to be developed. This can bore and frustrate. It can also mean that those pupils (the great majority) who do not complete the five year course, finish with little usable foreign language at the end. In other words, this kind of course organisation sees the acquisition of structure as more important than the rapid development of ability to convey meaning.

Disenchantment with this state of affairs, and disappointment at the low numbers of pupils who opt to continue their first foreign language for more than about three years has led to the graded syllabuses/examinations movement mentioned earlier. The work going on takes as its starting point the need to make intelligent, meaningful utterances, and whilst accepting that language cannot be learnt without acquiring grammar, it aims to teach the grammar only insofar as it is needed in order to make meaningful utterances.

It is difficult to escape the logic of the points made by several of our contributors that success in learning to communicate effectively in the foreign language context depends very heavily on the foreign language being used from the beginning as the almost exclusive vehicle of communication in the classroom. Pupils who do not converse naturally with their teacher and their friends in class are unlikely to converse naturally with foreigners. They do not acquire this ability through occasional lessons of 'conversation'.

* * *

Many foreign language teachers even in comprehensive schools continue to express doubts about attempting to teach foreign languages to slow learners. It is difficult to reconcile this attitude to the traditional idea of widening horizons, for less able children need this at least as much as the most able. It remains true, nevertheless, that the kinds of concept involved in this work outside the area of pure language teaching are difficult to teach in a vacuum, whatever the calibre of the pupils involved. Even in those cases where the teaching of facts about the country does lead to the making of hypotheses based on them, it is important to add the final step of verification or amendment of these hypotheses. This can be done only by testing the hypothesis against reality. In this case, reality is the foreigner in his own country.

This points to the critical importance of providing maximum opportunities for pupils to have contact with the foreign country. It follows from what has been said above that this is at least as important for pupils doing a course with a heavy 'background' component as for those involved in main-line language learning, and for those in the early stages of their course as for those in the later stages. Such contact is likely to be most effective, of course, if it happens in the foreign country.

To some degree, however, it can be of value if it involves pupils in meeting people from the country in question, within the United Kingdom.

Some LEAs make extensive provision for opportunities of this kind. Valid claims can be made for even brief contacts: pupils travel on trains for the first time ever, learn the importance of group cohesion, see that foreigners exist, and that they live in their own surroundings. For pupils staying in a residential centre, group living makes its impact on them; new habits have to be adhered to, new types of food eaten, and more or less probing enquiries can be made into the life styles of the natives of the country. Where home-to-home exchanges are possible - through linked schools, for instance - a much deeper insight into life styles can be gained, and pupils are also faced with the necessity to operate autonomously in a totally unfamiliar environment, to stand on their own feet, to accommodate their own wishes and ambitions temporarily to those of new acquaintances, to attempt to turn those acquaintances into friends, and even to attempt to bend these new friends to their own will, whilst retaining their goodwill. All of these are educationally worthwhile activities: coupled with the testing out of new and incomplete concepts against the reality of the foreign country, they have a convincing appearance of educational validity. It is no exaggeration to say that in some cases, links with a foreign school have brought new dimensions to many areas of the curriculum, in addition to the area of languages.

If the foreign visit, or contact with foreigners, is to be regarded as an integral part of the language course, however, it needs to be planned at least as carefully as any other part of the course. Experience shows that many groups which go abroad and stay in residential centres or hotels, are badly underprepared for their visit, and often undersupervised. If the visit is intended to teach, it must not be assumed that learning will result from random observation. If it is to be an integral part of the foreign language course, teachers need training - probably in-service, rather than initial - to help them to carry out this out-of-the-classroom teaching. Some initiation is needed into animation, environmental studies, simple observation and sampling procedures. Prior acquaintance with the residential centre is also essential. Strong claims can be made for the value of well-planned visits. No claims should be made for any other kind.

There is some research evidence indicating the value of well-planned foreign visits as part of the school course.[11] These refer both to the formation of better attitudes to foreigners and to linguistic performance. As Burstall puts it: 'Pupils who had been to France differed significantly in attitude and achievement from those who had not .... expressed more positive attitudes towards France and the French .... and reached a significantly higher level of achievement in both spoken and written French'.[12] This resulted from comparatively short visits.

Mrs Burstall's sample was of some 17,000 children. In the case of Leicestershire, over 50% more pupils than that have spent residential sessions in the County's centres abroad since 1969, and many thousands more have been on home-to-home exchanges. Our subjective evidence supports Mrs Burstall's measured results. It is interesting, too, that in LEAs with well-established programmes of visits, teachers continue to wish to take their pupils. This suggests that they consider the enterprise useful. It is also significant that many teachers stress the value of the visit particularly for less able pupils. Visits with pupils also perform a potentially useful language and civilisation refresher opportunity for teachers.

Of course the secondary school course can also provide opportunities for longer visits to the country. In some areas, including Leicestershire, sixth formers are able to spend a term working in the sixth form of a French or German school, and sharing the life of their foreign counterparts, either in the boarding section of a school or in a family. After an experience of this kind, pupils are found to have matured considerably. One seventeen year old girl put it like this:

> 'You learn a lot about yourself. You have to learn to be open-minded, and less automatic in your reactions to other people. You find you can tolerate things you thought you would find overwhelming or worrying. You also have to overcome things like homesickness. This makes you draw extra strength and stamina from somewhere inside you, and you realise there are parts of your own make-up you weren't aware of.'

Almost 200 of our sixth formers have had this experience in the last ten years.

In her contribution to this volume, Elizabeth Holden deals with reading, which is probably the skill least practised in schools. Teaching pupils to read is something which very rarely seems to be consciously dealt with, although it is far from self evident that a pupil who understands a series of words when spoken will automatically be able to recognise them when they are written or printed. Take, for instance, the question form *Qu'est-ce que c'est?*. Since even silent reading is accompanied by movement in the vocal chords, it is important that from the beginning - and not only at the beginning - pupils be taught to associate written with spoken symbols.

Reading aloud from a book is an unnatural activity in a classroom, as few pupils (except those who later become French teachers, or those who have bilingual children) will ever need to do it in real life, and reading aloud around the class is non-participatory for most pupils, and boring for many, if it goes on for long. It is also difficult for teachers to correct in detail, and correction is impossible when whole classes read aloud together. Occasional reading aloud of a sentence for other reasons written on the blackboard serves all the same purposes, and varies the teaching activity simply and briefly.

In the middle years of foreign language learning, silent extensive reading for pleasure rarely seems to be encouraged. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that pupils beginning foreign languages at Advanced Level are often unable, or unwilling, to read a short story or novel. The ability to do so, however, ought surely to be one of the long term objectives set for more able pupils lower down the school. If so, short term objectives would need to include reading for pleasure at the appropriate linguistic level. This point is further developed in my chapter on literature in the sixth form.

* * *

This introduction to foreign language teaching across the ability range seems perhaps to have concentrated particularly on the problems posed by less able pupils. If so, this reflects the great concern caused by those problems in newly reorganised secondary schools. However, if a corrective were needed, it is to be found in *Modern languages in comprehensive schools*[13] which suggested that the standards of attainment of more able children give cause for concern, and those of sixth formers particularly so. It would be tragic if teaching modern languages across the ability range lessened the chances of progress of the potentially more and most able linguists. After all, these pupils form the reservoir from which future foreign language teachers will be drawn. They are also the pupils in whom the contribution to the curriculum of the foreign language course is most vividly seen.

For those who choose to study foreign languages in the sixth form, we must ensure the existence of appropriate courses, both at Advanced Level and at a non-specialist continuation level: many school-teachers are not well-informed about the types of examination available through agencies such as the Institute of Linguists, or the Business Education Council, and more effort could go into the organisation of non-specialist sixth form courses, along many different lines, as Working Paper 28 pointed out.[14]

However, as the proportion of pupils carrying on a foreign language in the sixth form appears likely in the short term to represent a small percentage of the age group, most of even our more gifted pupils will not go further with their foreign language learning than the end of the fifth year. Even by then, however, some pupils - a much higher proportion than at present - are capable of a high degree of spoken and written fluency. I cannot be alone in having heard 11-year-old beginners in French with excellent accents, and second-year pupils easily responding with natural 'throw-away' phrases such as mais bien sûr or non, non, pas du tout. I have met English children in their third year of learning French who were capable of answering real, unexpected telephone calls from France, at least to the extent of explaining that the person wanted was not in, and of taking gist messages. I have met many fourth formers capable of writing simple but attractive poetry in French. I have met many fifth formers with a very high degree of reading fluency in foreign languages, and sixth formers capable of talking intelligently in the foreign language about their reaction to their set books. The relevance of such anecdotal evidence is simply to stress that many children in quite ordinary schools can reach very high levels of performance in a foreign language, if imaginatively taught.

Although nobody suggests any longer that foreign languages can be learnt in school in the same way as the mother tongue is acquired, some reference to the nature of mother tongue acquisition is perhaps not inappropriate here.

'Much that is written about the phenomenon of language .... seems to suggest that language occurs in the individual by a kind of spontaneous linguistic combustion in the early years of life. This view obscures the crucial fact that language develops as part of the interaction between the individual and his environment.' If we replace the words 'in the early years of life' in this quotation from Geoffrey Thornton[7] by 'in the foreign language classroom', its relevance to our situation is clear.

The following longer quotation from Geoffrey Thornton also gives the foreign language teacher reasons for reflection, particularly if 'environment' is replaced by 'foreign language classroom' again:

> 'Language is not simply a matter of sounds, or of sounds put together as words, or of words put together as sentences. It has many features, such as intonation, stress, pitch, use of pausing, which combine and inter-relate to endow particular stretches of sounds with particular meanings .... by exposure to, and interaction with, the language of the environment, a person learns its phonology and grammar. This language exists, and is used, in what it virtually a syntactic relationship with features of the environment. Gestures, expressions, people, objects, all can complete, or supplement, the meaning of a bit of language .... Concentration on syntax may tend to obscure the fact that language in use, face to face, is embedded in gestures and expressions, in fact in a body language with a syntax all of its own .... by experiencing language at work in his environment, by being subjected to it, by observing what other people use it for, a child develops - together with his mastery of forms of the language - a notion of what it is and is not appropriate to use language for.'[7]

Pat Brockman develops this point further and questions whether we stretch linguists adequately, in his reference to M A K Halliday's 'models' of language, which reflect what the child thinks language can be used for. Halliday himself suggests that for general learning in schools, the two most important models for learning are the personal (language as a form of the child's individuality) and the heuristic (language as a means of finding things out). It is interesting to reflect to what extent pupils in foreign-language classes are taught to operate in these two models. Halliday warns that the ability to operate linguistically 'does not follow automatically from the acquisition of the grammar and vocabulary of the language. It is not .... a question of which words and structures the child knows or uses, but of their functional significance and interpretation.' The child learns language in situations of use. 'To understand the nature of language, it is necessary to start from considerations of its use.'[7]

Referring to Halliday's models, Thornton says that 'if the language used around him (in our case, the foreign language classroom) does not extend to one or other of these functions, then he cannot be expected to learn for himself how to use language for that purpose'. Obvious as it sounds, it is perhaps worth stressing that foreign language teachers cannot expect their pupils to perform in the foreign language in any way to which they have not been adequately exposed, either in the classroom, or in contact with native speakers of the language.

Richard Leeson pursues this point in a book more explicitly concerned with foreign-language learning. He makes the distinction between 'language-like behaviour' and 'knowing the language'. The first is characterised by a one-to-one relationship between stimulus and response, and the inability of the speaker to respond flexibly to stimuli other than those to which he has been accustomed. 'Knowing the language' is characterised by the ability to respond flexibly and appropriately to any stimulus, whether experienced before or not, that may call for a linguistic response. 'Finite exposure to a finite corpus of language', has to give rise to the indefinite production of many sentences conforming to the phonetic, syntactic, and semantic rules of the language. Clearly, its development depends totally on maximum exposure to all three of these components. 'Neurological evidence shows that without a substantial quantity of material to process, the language processing devices of the brain cannot fulfil their function adequately', Leeson states.[15]

Schools have tended to overstress the syntactic rules of language. However, as C E Osgood, quoted by Leeson, puts it: 'We rarely talk grammatical gibberish.' In fact we rarely talk at all unless we want to say something. Thus, in real life, the most significant aspect of speech is not syntactic, but semantic. The main objective of language learning, therefore, be it of mother tongue or of foreign language, should be a high degree of ideational fluency. Beyond the elementary level, this is indeed the distinctive feature of the performance of more capable foreign language learners.

What lessons can be drawn from the description of language included in this section? The numbered paragraphs below will perhaps help the reader to focus his or her attention constructively while reading the chapters which follow, whatever the level of ability of his or her pupils:

1. Pupils need the maximum intensity and volume of exposure to the foreign language itself. Simply, they need to be surrounded with it all the time they are in the foreign-language room. Every minute spent hearing, speaking, reading or writing the mother tongue reduces both the time available and the probability that the 'language processing devices of the brain' will fulfil their function adequately. Unordered language randomly proposed is not what is suggested, but carefully selected, comprehensible language capable of further use and extension by the learners.

2. Pupils need to be made able rapidly to influence their world - this is, after all, the basis of the earliest forms of language used by babies. They need to be given scope to make unrehearsed statements from an early stage. We forget, through long exposure to the language we teach, the thrill we derived from making our first unscripted responses to foreign language stimuli. From the first, we should aim to make our pupils autonomous, by concentrating on teaching language which is potentially generative, and capable of expressing ideas, sentiments, opinions. Fluency can be measured only in terms of functional efficiency, the ability to convey meaning. In teaching terms, this means giving more attention to what pupils want to say. This may mean a different ordering of material from what was intended.

   Here is an exchange:

   'Que faisais-tu à huit heures hier soir?' (intention of teacher: to practise the imperfect tense)
   'Je . . . . étais on my horse.' (intention of pupil: to convey the truth)

   The most important thing is for the teacher to teach the elements the pupil wants to give signs of pleasure at the pupil's implied request for help. This should not be taken to mean, of course, that the teacher will willingly translate any item at just any time. Careful planning of material presented should allow the teacher to force pupils gladly to want to say what he (the teacher) knows will be generative.

   At a different level of re-ordering of material, the subjunctive is not 'difficult' if used in realistic situations, e.g. 'Que fallait-il qu'elle dise?' Nor is the passé composé a problem in realistic usage, such as real excuses, e.g. 'J'ai été voir Monsieur le Principal.'

3. Speech depends on inter-personal relationships, Thornton's 'syntactic relationships with the environment'. The teacher should try from the beginning to give some appreciation of register, social role and the way in which form and meaning interact. The cognitive and affective areas of usage should be stressed more. This can be done only by using the language in fully meaningful ways with the pupils. When it rains, the teacher can try using expressions like 'Quel sale temps!'. The teacher can use polite expressions when interrupting their written work in class, e.g. 'Excuse-moi de te déranger, mais . . . .' or when commenting upon their work, e.g. 'Mais il est adorable, ce dessin!' The teacher should also find ways of making the pupils use this sort of language, to ensure that they actually know it: 'Excusez-moi de vous déranger, monsieur/madame, mais . . . .'

4. Course books should be regarded as no more than valuable support-materials. The foreign language has an existence quite apart from them. All teachers are capable of:

   - inventing stories
   - modifying stories for a purpose, e.g. Le Chaperon Rouge to give repetition of exclamatory que - 'Que tes oreilles sont longues!'

- telling real stories in appropriate language, e.g. La bataille de Bosworth 1485, La vie d'Elvis Presley
- producing minimal data from which language can be gleaned, e.g. sound effects, pin men, charts, figures, e.g. 20% des Francais fument/parlent espagnol, etc
- creating role-play contexts, with variable data to be modified at will, e.g. addresses, telephone numbers, likes, dislikes, ambitions.

Such un-bookish teaching techniques let the language stand on its own. The only indicator of pupil capability is accurate pupil performance, based on unrehearsed responses to stimuli. In real life, language is continuously inventive.

5. Pupils should be encouraged from the start not to want to give only minimal responses. One of the major defects of language learners in schools is that they rarely show an inclination towards extended discourse, which in the real-life context is the basis of intelligent and enjoyable conversation. It is helpful to develop strategies to encourage multi-sentence utterances:

   - in essay preparation (for first year pupils, five or six line compositions are quite feasible), the teacher can insist that occasionally individuals give their version of all that has so far been said
   - extended dialogues can be transformed into reported speech
   - individual pupils can be asked to invent four or five sentences incorporating one given sentence in a natural context
   - pupils can be asked to say all that they can imagine about a picture, e.g. 'Where was he/she going when . . . .?' 'Why?' 'With whom?' 'What were they saying to each other?'

6. Similarly, pupils need to learn from an early stage as wide a range of ways of expressing the same idea as possible, in order to prevent the slightly embarrassed use of a single form of utterance which in certain contexts proves inadequate. Un niveau-seuil,[16] for instance, gives numerous ways of expressing assent, from strong through to hesitant. In 'approbation forte' (II, 15.1) it gives almost thirty exponents, including some which are absolutely straightforward, e.g. oui, certes, évidemment, effectivement, absolument, exactement, as well as some rather more complex ones. One of our aims must be to teach our pupils to use a range of the various possibilities which exist.

7. Accent and intonation are not totally unimportant; they are interpreted by outsiders as the first indicator of the personality of the speaker. They can be used purposefully as personality enhancers. Intonation, in particular, is related closely to the way in which a language works. The teacher gives examples every time he speaks. Quoi? can be used with the rising intonation of incredulity, the monotone of suspicion, the bark of anger. Oui can range

from the sharp interrogative following a knock on the door through to the uncertain 'mouais'.

It is quite feasible to invent realistic drills to practise the expression of emotion through intonation and/or word choice, even for beginners:

'Je suis fatigué.'
'T'es fatigué? Mais non!' (conciliatory, suasive intonation)

8. The last paragraph dealt with encoding feeling. Decoding the paralinguistic element also needs teaching, so that pupils can differentiate intonation patterns, identify different accents, hear more than the words say. This implies use of a variety of recorded voices of real foreigners. Pupils are known to dislike repeating after a tape-recorder. The machine, nevertheless, has many other useful purposes, including those concerned with careful listening.

9. Although it has been considered premature to write much in this publication of the move towards graded syllabuses, some reference seems appropriate to the implications of work currently going on towards the elaboration of syllabuses based on communicative competence.

A methodology remains to be developed which will retain both the potential educational value of foreign language study, and those elements of methodology already proved logically and effectively desirable. In this methodology, the search for language which produces communicative competence would dictate the elements of lexis to be taught, and the elements of grammar stressed. It might also affect the order in which grammar is introduced, but there would be other constraints which might equally influence this ordering. One of these would be the desirability of operating in the foreign language class almost exclusively in the foreign language. It would be necessary, no doubt, to go through some 'non-communicative' phases - as few as possible - in order to lay the foundations for a surer communicative competence later. Later would need to be much sooner, however, than in the more traditional types of course organisation. The degree of grammatical depth sought would no doubt be one of the factors differentiating the courses for learners of differing linguistic competence. Our aims being, however, to give some understanding of how a language works, it would be unacceptable for pupils, even of low ability, to be taught without an attempt to produce in them some measure of appreciation of some of the ways in which language remains comprehensible: grammatical accuracy would be one of those ways.

No doubt the attempts to teach language for communication will cause a revised attitude to accuracy, in grammar, pronunciation, intonation. Even for the least able pupils, however, it is clearly essential for teachers to maintain high standards of example and high levels of expectation: it can never be an acceptable aim to teach inaccurate expression, although it will be possible to expect only that measure of accuracy in reply which is consonant with the pupil's highest level of achievement and the possibility of his utterance being understood. (In fact, grammatical approaches to language teaching have frequently taught misleading and inaccurate language, later to be unlearned, in the belief that this process was easier for pupils). Without attempts to produce accuracy, it is unlikely that pupils will be learning very efficiently about how languages operate, nor that their learning will lead to an awareness of the distinctiveness of one language compared to another. It is arguably undesirable for slovenly speech to be accepted in the mother tongue, since it is uneconomical, unattractive, and unlikely to express meaning with any degree of finesse: pupils need to realise that slovenly approaches to a foreign langugage can have just the same features, and, most important, that comprehension can break down much more easily, even through inaccurate intonation. Furthermore, if teachers are to derive help from error analysis, it is important that pupils try not to scatter random error over every utterance. This being said, however, the highest levels of teacher expectation need to be tempered with the need to encourage pupils to articulate foreign utterances, which excessive correction can hinder. Differentiated teacher objectives will need to be established, and no doubt in some cases an acceptance of gross inaccuracy, if this indicates at least comprehension.

The teaching of pupils to make comprehensible utterances in the foreign language is much more complex than most non-language teachers imagine. It should also be said that if this chapter has attempted to place foreign language study in the secondary school curriculum, and to indicate that its contribution potentially goes much beyond the attempt to teach pupils to make such utterances, it is important for language teachers to realise that a course which fails to teach such competence nevertheless makes an incomplete contribution to the curriculum.

10. Language cannot be acquired through passivity. It requires the exercise of initiative. It only works properly when bold, imaginative leaps are taken. If we want pupils to be able to cope abroad, they must be able to cope in class. We must show them continuously, by making them do so, that they can cope, so that as Virgil said about birds, 'they can fly because they think they can fly'.

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2. Aims & objectives

Eric Garner

'It would indeed be cynicism to put modern languages in the curriculum for all as a mere gesture, without specifying realistic goals, without providing sufficient room on the timetable, and without providing teachers with the equipment, training and opportunity to teach smaller groups within a flexible syllabus'.[1]

This was written in 1972. Five years later, Eric Hawkins was reminding us of the unique challenge that the native-speaker 'model' represents for language teachers, and the devastating effect that this implicit point of reference can have for young language learners, in the absence of limited and clearly articulated goals, as it leads inevitably to frustration, negative self-evaluation and a crucial loss of motivation.[2]

Today, we are obliged to recognise that any attempt to teach a modern language as a 'total' system must be self-defeating. Instead, we must ask what part of the chosen languages can most usefully and realistically be taught, taking as our starting-point the learners' own needs in the fullest sense, and the inescapable constraints of the school setting.

It is significant that the extension of opportunities to begin the study of a foreign language from the former selective base to perhaps 85% of pupils in the relevant age-groups at present has coincided with massive structural reconstruction, so that, for example, many young people now pursue their modern language studies within 'three-tier' systems where age of transfer has become arbitrary and distinctions between primary and secondary sectors are often blurred.

These discontinuities are seen as a powerful negative force, both by HMI[3] and by teachers involved, since there may be little uniformity of course content or provision among parallel contributory schools, and length of course for the first public examination will vary considerably in receiving schools of different type; yet the external examination framework continues to constrain flexibility of approach and the majority of published courses - especially for French - presuppose an uninterrupted five-year span, with no clear intermediate objectives.

If anything is sure, it is that the tidy format inherited from earlier days has now been lost for the great mass of pupils. With well over a half of learners on average abandoning their language study by the end of the (notional) secondary third year, the 'monolithic' French or German course, with its grammatically ordered progression, contrived samples of language and expectation that operational facility will be somehow acquired almost by osmosis is as irrelevant to our present situation as is the conventional, undefined 'O' level or CSE examination to which it leads - a monument to the powers of divination of former generations of language teachers, or perhaps, to parody a well-known aphorism, the indigestible in pursuit of the unspeakable.

Given the organisational complexity which now obtains in what used to be the secondary sector, the fluidity of provision for languages, the continuing pace of change, and the many other imponderables, we must adjust to the different basis on which languages are now generally offered and accept correspondingly changed criteria for our expectations. To take as our yardstick in prescribing course content, or evaluating attainment, an earlier state of affairs in which only about a quarter of our most able pupils ever encountered a foreign language, in very different conditions, would be futile. It may be thought that the re-adjustment has long since taken place and that in recent years we have been pre-occupied with the needs of less able language learners in particular. Where radical changes have occurred in this direction, the perspective which emerged has still been only partial, and in reality much public discussion of modern languages tacitly adopts former assumptions, as do many course objectives, syllabuses and teaching materials. Nothing less than a total shift of emphasis will do.

The false dawn of the Sixties has proved illusory in another sense, as the predicted 'language revolution' rested not only on advances in technology but also on an audio-lingual theory of second language acquisition which has now been superseded and can be seen as erroneous and incomplete in several important respects. The influence of Chomsky has been seminal not so much because of any specific concepts or grammatical models which he elaborated, but because of the richly dynamic view of language which he propagated and the decisive direction which he gave to linguistic research. The simplistic view of language as mere 'code' is no longer tenable.

Subsequently, insights gleaned from studies of child language acquisition, from socio-linguistics and from social psychology have placed the emphasis firmly on meaning at the expense of pure form, giving a semantic and cognitive gloss to our total view of language and placing it within a cultural framework, as implied in Hymes' phrase 'communicative competence'. Applied linguists have begun to suggest alternative bases for language teaching programmes, perhaps the best known being the Council of Europe's 'Unit Credit' system with syllabuses constructed on notional-functional lines in several languages for the 'Threshold Level'. Much of this work has already had immediate practical application in the teaching of English as a foreign language and in modern language teaching to adults, but the implications of contemporary linguistic knowledge for foreign language instruction have been mediated only imperfectly and intermittently to teachers in schools. Roy Dunning takes the discussion further in Chapter 4.

It is true that 'communication' is generally reckoned to be the chief aim of language courses today, but the term has become a facile slogan, often signifying little more than the inclusion of some limited and ritual oral practice in lessons, 'conversation' grafted on to traditional materials. Few would doubt that communication should indeed dominate language learning and use; perhaps our greatest challenge is to translate this belief into practical classroom terms. Of course, the communicative void at the heart of linguistic apprenticeship for its own sake has always presented a particular problem to language teachers, who have commonly lacked both the context and the content more immediately available to colleagues dealing with other areas of skill or knowledge. However, some of the procedures enshrined in conventional practices and materials seem to stem from a principle of 'anti-communication' and to approach the surrealist fantasy of a Ionesco.

Such self-imposed barriers between the language learning process and external reality (explored in a penetrating article by D E Ingram[5]) would include trite and unauthentic speech samples or dialogues, stereotyped characters and situations far removed from pupils' own experience, the unthinking repetition in a stimulus-response vacuum of fragmented utterances, language laboratory drills involving the manipulation and 'rehearsal' of phrases without any meaningful context, mechanical gap-filling exercises and question-and-answer work of the 'Qu'est-ce que c'est?' 'C'est un pupitre.' variety. (Incidentally, how often is a phrase such as 'Qu'est-ce que c'est?' taught in its contemporary sense of 'What's the matter?' or 'What do you want?'. In classrooms where French is used as the vehicle of daily communication between pupils and teacher, it is bound to occur in such a sense.)

To reverse these processes, it is often said by cynics, would logically entail either teaching a separate and distinct corpus of non-linguistic material through the foreign language (as in 'sections bilingues' or international schools) or transferring the learning process to the foreign environment, with 'total immersion' in both languages and culture, and continuous practice in communicating, much of it on a one-to-one basis. But even within existing constraints, a good deal more could be done to profit from our hard-won understanding if, on the one hand, foreign language study were always closely integrated with study of the foreign milieu and people (preferably through class links, reciprocal visits, periods of fieldwork abroad), and if, on the other, language teachers consciously pursued genuine communication, both inside and outside the classroom, as their main guiding principle, using the foreign language in contexts where it actually means something, as Roy Dunning suggests in his chapter.

A re-orientation of this kind would require the creation of a sympathetic 'rapport' and the deliberate selection of language and linguistic activities to serve immediate communicative needs and above all to engage the learners' feeling and interests. The twin keys to positive motivation in the early stages, on which later achievements must be based, are active enjoyment of language lessons (and the sheer sense of fun which is so important to younger children) together with repeated short-term success in mastering worth-while tasks that lie within pupils' capacity. In both respects, we have compared badly in the past with our colleagues teaching other areas of the curriculum, as the poor reputation and high drop-out rate of French in particular testify all too eloquently.

How often do we capitalise on our pupils' personal preferences and teach them to express sentiments which mean something to them, or deal with themes that can engage them wholly? How prepared are we to allow learners to experiment and take risks with the language - to attempt to grapple creatively with new expressions instead of alway requiring the hallowed sequence of presentation, repetition, exploitation and (finally) 'communication'? How much emphasis do we place on grammatical explanation and on abstract appreciation of formal principles at the expense of teaching pupils to perform concrete tasks with the language? What prominence do we give to drama, simulations, progressively more demanding role-play from the earliest stages rather than as a self-contained examination exercise? To what extent, finally, do we relate language work directly to the pupils' own experience or to significant (for them) aspects of their French or German contemporaries' experience. For example, how much use is made of simple devices such as involving classes in the changing fortunes of real foreign football teams, using a master league table, with results noted from the sporting press, the appropriate vocabulary taught, reports of matches used as 'texts', etc?

Given the degree to which aims and objectives seen as appropriate for traditional grammar school language learners have been extended to embrace pupils of widely divergent abilities, and given also the nature of the teaching materials usually available to hard-pressed language staff, it is hardly surprising if debate is sometimes permeated by a sense of failure. However, we should examine carefully what we imply by 'failure' and then consider what positive changes we might want to suggest in order to adapt to our new circumstances.

Many of the submissions prepared for the first National Congress on Languages in Education in July 1978[6] were helpful both in terms of diagnosis and of remedy, among them the evidence presented to the Munn Committee by the Scottish Central Committee for Modern Languages. This paper contains a carefully considered case for the inclusion of modern languages within the school curriculum, together with proposals for a re-orientation of courses. Its analysis of 'failure' is most pertinent:

> 'The argument from failure is the one most widely used to discredit a modern language as a component in the curriculum for general education. What is striking is that those who use the term 'failure' in this context give it an absolute sense with no apparent awareness that it can be used appropriately only in the context of a clearly-defined input-output situation, where, that is to say, there is a precise definition of aims, content, learning experiences (backed ideally by materials) related to clearly defined populations of pupils. The result of this misuse of the term is that the aims of most current language courses in our schools - which are sometimes formulated, but as often taken for granted - are made to appear the only possible ones, and those pupils unable to achieve them are viewed as trespassers in areas reserved for an élite . . . . The real task is to redefine aims with our present population of language learners in mind and to reconsider our concept of mastery in relation to modern language courses today.'

A concomitant difficulty has been the readiness of many language teachers to indicate error rather than success and to be less tolerant of learners' mistakes than would most native speakers when faced with a young foreigner. We may demand higher standards of grammatical accuracy in well-formed L2 utterances than pupils have been able to achieve in their own language, or even in some cases than would always be demanded of foreign pupils of the same age. The result is that all too often 'a language class can seem an unrelieved post-mortem, or an inquisition for grammatical sins'.[7]

The resulting discouragement (felt by teachers and pupils alike) stems inevitably from approaches ordered on grammatical (or 'structural') rather than communicative principles; such materials include virtually all of the standard textbook-based or audio-visual courses normally used in secondary schools. Where the course is ostensibly built around topics or situations, these are often no more than a transparent plastic peg on which to hang lexis and structure, selected with other criteria in mind. Duncan Sidwell extends this point in his contribution to this publication.

Linguistic 'error' is an essential and creative element of the language learning process and only if we recognise this shall we begin to accept the case for wider, communicative criteria, particularly in evaluating oral production. Language learning is not a simple, finite affair and the goals most readily understood by pupils and parents - a pass at GCE 'O' level or CSE - are impossibly remote for many beginners, besides being totally arbitrary as to degree of competence reached. Failure, too, is relative. 'Our colleagues in mathematics and physics do not produce batches of Einsteins after three or four years of study, and Stravinskys are rare in the music room. Students interested in language and uninhibited in using the little they have assimilated will have a foundation on which to build when the oportunity presents itself. Surely all true education is beginnings.'[8]

As David Smith suggests in the previous chapter, if we seek a 'global' justification for teaching a modern language to the great majority of children as part of the 'common curriculum', it must surely be that the experience, properly conceived, can promote intellectual, moral and emotional growth by reducing egocentricity in terms of both culture and language. To enhance individual consciousness and autonomy is a fundamental purpose of the educational process and, in principle, few teachers are better placed to achieve this than modern linguists with their broad perspective and extensive knowledge of at least one other language and culture, usually derived at first hand from living in the foreign country.

It would seem to be indispensable that British children, who are after all insular by geography and hence by definition, should as an element of their general education be led to question the naive or 'natural' view of both language and culture as 'given', before attitudes become hardened and stereotypes fixed. The crucial insights to be communicated would include the realisation that languages do not all express reality in identical terms, nor do their elements stand in a simple one-to-one relationship with each other, while a foreign culture represents the sum total of a multiplicity of individual and collective characteristics, relationships, predilections, influences and responses to experience over time, mediated through the language, and is not simply an eccentric and arbitrary deformation of the pupil's own 'world view'. This form of understanding, which can be liberating in a very profound sense, need not imply a sophisticated degree of linguistic expertise or cultural knowledge; it does imply conscious and informed guidance by teachers.

In my view, the Scottish Central Committee[9] has identified correctly the two major curricular aims of school-based modern language courses as follows:

Aim 1

'To develop in children an understanding of, an interest in, and a respect for the way of life in a society other than their own, thus adding to their understanding of themselves and their own society.'

Aim 2

'To sensitise pupils to the nature and the functions of language.'

This second aim brings us squarely into the area discussed in the Bullock Report [10] and to the (largely unrealised) potential of modern language study for general linguistic development, including comparative work on the mother tongue in co-operation with English staff. Again, systematic programmes adjusted to pupils' individual circumstances will be needed, but the scope is enormous.

In a total curricular framework, these two aims must take precedence over a third, subject-specific aim, which I should characterise as follows:

Aim 3

> 'To promote an active command over selected aspects of the foreign language as a basis for communication by developing proficiency in the four major skill areas according to pupils' capacities.'

Thus, the building of performance skills in the foreign language would remain central to the programme and provide the nub of the teaching from the beginning (especially listening comprehension and speaking in the early stages) but this task would subserve the two more general aims, leading to greater development of concurrent 'background understanding' for all and giving a generalist bias to modern language study.

A change of emphasis of this nature, designed to make of the first foreign language a broadly educative experience for all pupils, would seem to imply making some distinction between semi-autonomous 'foundation' and 'continuation' phases of language learning, with flexibility in the nature and length of each component to match the individual circumstances and organisational pattern of schools, since the 'linear dash' from 11+ through a common, cumulative language course for all has proved to be misguided, even where schools are still organised on 11-16 or 11-18 lines.

Some of the characteristics of a 'foundation phase' ordered on communicative principles have already been referred to. It would have an oral/aural 'core', with the emphasis on listening; reading would be introduced at the level of recognition - of common signs, instructions, etc - and writing as a support to the spoken word, at the discretion of the teacher. Much of the work would be functional and topic-related in character, with natural classroom interchange in English being used where appropriate to bring out features of the foreign way of life or discuss comparative aspects of language - 'loan words', homonyms, synonyms, speech rhythms, intonation patterns, and so on. This would provide an easy foundation for similar exercises right up to the final 'A' level examination. There would be little place for grammar in the traditional sense but considerable stress on enjoying language and participating in games, quizzes, songs and saynètes. Above all, the accent would fall on immediate, short-term success, since without this the broad educational goals referred to above will certainly be negated.

During the continuation phase, the main emphasis would fall on the further development of performance skills in the foreign language and on an instrumental grasp of its structure and functions, although the wider linguistic and cultural aims would not be sacrificed. (Indeed, the contextual element would take on ever more significance as an ability to deal directly with foreign language material was developed.) At this stage, too, those general study skills exercised by language learning - fine discrimination of sound and sense, memorisation, the recognition of 'pattern' together with skills of analysis, classification and reference, the making of analogies and drawing of inferences, application of data to new contexts, gist extraction of material, comparison and synthesis - would increasingly come into play and pupils who demonstrated a distinctive aptitude for foreign language learning would be helped to develop their talents to the full. In this connection, an article by H H Stern is illuminating.[11]

The advanced phase should see a systematic increase in foreign language competence based on a study in depth of the target culture and society, using a range of contemporary source materials (with literature as only one, optional element) and allowing for significant personal enquiry. The Schools Council Working Paper No 28, and later, the 'N' and 'F' feasibility studies[12] showed the potential of a 'thematic' approach to language development at this level. As has often been pointed out, however, perhaps the most pressing need in sixth forms is for greatly increased opportunities for students to follow ancillary and 'ab initio' language courses beyond 16+. These courses, too, demand proper definition, with concentration on specified skill areas or lexical fields according to students' needs (e.g. recent 'A'/'O' syllabuses in French/German for Business Studies) and precise task-specifications of the kind to be found in some of the syllabuses used in further education. Ewen Bird develops some of these points in a later chapter.

At all stages, provision must be made to accommodate the full range of language learners now in secondary schools and this can only be done by appropriate differentiation of objectives. During the 'foundation phase' some differentiation within materials would allow individual pupils to reach their own potential, but school policy and organisation would seem to preclude radical differentiation between pupil 'populations' at the initial stage.

It is within this philosophical and organisational framework that some pronouncements on language teaching arouse misgivings. For example, the final section of the HMI document Matters for Discussion 3[3] adumbrates objectives for four groups of pupils, or rather two main sets - those who will continue a language course until 16 and take a public examination, and those who will follow a shorter course to 14+ - with sub-sets of more and less able in each. As an appendix to Curriculum 11-16: modern languages[13], a table of 'possible goals, tentatively offered' by HMI, extends this analysis and incorporates an intermediate category of pupils of 'average ability' whose course will last '3, 4 or 5 years, depending on local circumstances and on motivation'. There is also a suggested list of mid-course goals for those pupils who intend to pursue their study beyond the third year. Inevitably, objectives are couched in general terms, but the concept of pupil segregation from an early stage comes through clearly, as does a marked bias towards norm-referencing and, in the document itself, the conventional, linear view of language learning.

Why, for example, is it hesitantly suggested that 'it may be desirable to base language activities, after a period of diagnosis, on a situational or topic approach' only for those pupils who 'find difficulty in retaining the essential patterns and vocabulary'? Surely, such an approach, with context being given equal weight, would provide a fuller educational experience and increased relevance for all pupils. As for the nature of our existing goals, the Secretary of State commented during the first National Congress on Languages in Education (reported in TES of 7/7/78) that present 'O' and 'A' level syllabuses 'are almost calculated to put the average child off language learning altogether'. Needless to say, the introduction of a common examining system at 16+ will do nothing to resolve this problem without a more fundamental change of approach and a thorough-going reappraisal of present objectives. (The 'trial' 16+ examinations conducted in 1978 by the JMB and the Northern CSE boards, where equal weighting was given to all four skills, had the advantage of a syllabus defined in some detail, though again largely along familiar 'structural' lines.)

At the very least, we should envisage a carefully graded continuum of closely defined 'performance objectives' in each of the major skill areas, with related 'contextual' targets. Detailed delineation of objectives in this way represents an immediate challenge to all of us and can only be achieved on the basis of our collective experience of actual pupil performance under varying conditions. A good deal of work has been done by Valette and Disick and others in the United States, for example, though objectives there may remain tied to audio-lingual assumptions. In the UK, the most promising development has been in the realm of graded levels of achievement, with detailed specifications emerging from a number of local areas. Since the major structural, organisational and methodological shifts of recent years preclude us from setting 'absolute' targets for pupil performance with any certainty, experimentation of this kind, especially where it is based on alternative models of syllabus design, and modified in the light of experience with diverse groups of learners at various levels, should help us all to frame and implement linguistic objectives more precisely, though it would be most unfortunate if such an approach were confined to less able pupils or limited to 'survival language'.

* * *

At several points in this chapter I have reiterated the importance of framing clearly defined short-term objectives, tailored to the needs and aptitudes of the very heterogeneous groups of children learning modern languages in our schools today. Before concluding, I should like to give one or two examples of the kind of 'targets' that might be appropriate to the various skill areas, whilst realising that these can only be tentative and descriptive and in no way 'absolute' or prescriptive, since circumstances can vary so much that what are seen as perfectly reasonable goals in one school or area may be quite unrealistic elsewhere. In the complete absence to date of any precise definition of national expectations, even for the public rituals at 16+ and 18+, we can only proceed by trial and error, suggesting a range of possibilities. Some of the points I raise are dealt with at more length in Duncan Sidwell's contribution to this publication.

Listening comprehension can range from mere recognition of which language is being spoken (in Wilkins' suggested 'level of formulaic proficiency') to the most sophisticated appreciation of argument, register, allusion, irony, 'special pleading' and a whole range of rhetorical effects (in the 'formal' mode) at advanced levels. Each intermediate step may imply the development of a matching range of responses. At the earliest 'foundation' stage, a few weeks' instruction in French might include learning to recognise the rising intonation characterising a 'Yes/No' question as well as the words qui and combien; dealing receptively and productively with numbers and taking the immediate family as a topic, perhaps limiting exploitation to the forms j'ai and c'est and including as lexical items only mère, père, frère and soeur at the core, with one or two other family members added as optional extras. Then a suitable listening objective might be the recognition of simple questions or statement about one's immediate family, allowing for some repetition by the speaker in a face-to-face context, and an ability to understand in particular how many brothers or sisters the speaker has. (At a subsequent stage, similar information on tape, e.g. from a class link, could be decoded or isolated from a segment of connected speech.)

At this elementary level, the pupils' responses would be limited to checking off the information against pictures representing the four basic family members and matching utterances by giving 'True/False' answers to such statements as C'est le père or verifying individual items of information given in French about a speaker's family composition by means of a multiple-choice test, probably compiled in English. (The parallel speaking objective would probably be limited at this stage to conveying the number of brothers/sisters that the pupil in fact has, either by giving simply a number - in French - or a 'formulaic' statement such as J'ai deux frères in response to a direct question, e.g. Tu as des frères? He or she might also be expected to identify a photograph of his/her own family, using the phrases C'est ma mère/C'est mon frère John etc, where first person possessive adjectives had been taught functionally in connection with the topic.) Later chapters - by Peter Wheeldon, and the staff of De Lisle School - develop these points.

At a later stage, perhaps after two years of French, pupils of average ability might be expected to understand and communicate to others a comparable corpus of personal information, covering such aspects as self-identification, age, family, pets, home town, school and leisure interests. In addition they might be expected to understand and deal with a range of topics such as 'finding the way in town', whose lexical and structural parameters will again have been closely specified, but which will obviously represent, individually and collectively, a more extensive learning task than the example given above. The stated objective would be to understand (and possibly act on) directions given in French by a native speaker making some concessions (i.e. speaking clearly and a little more slowly than usual) and employing a restricted range of locutions to indicate the route between various public buildings. Pupils would thus be expected to learn both for recognition and productivity - Pour aller à . . . ., s'il vous plaît?, the names of some half a dozen important buildings, perhaps a dozen locutions of direction (imperatives and adverbial phrases from the 'notional' field of spatial expressions) and the appropriate formulae for greeting, leave-taking, etc. Understanding could be assessed by means of a town plan or street map, perhaps in conjunction with a series of recorded dialogues from which the salient items would have to be abstracted. Other topics of a 'survival' type at this stage would make use of simple public announcements or dialogues in shops, cafés, etc as a basis for aural comprehension, and brief spoken responses would now be required in appropriate instances. (The topic-based approach, of course, needs structuring, too. An article by Herbert Hayes examines how this might happen.[14])

At a similar stage, reading might well be limited to the recognition of public signs, notices, etc and to the extraction of basic information re: prices, times, etc from menus, shopping lists, timetables and the like. Writing would be confined to copying accurately useful 'samples' of the language, as reinforcement. Relevant 'background knowledge', i.e. in the context of 'survival' topics, that understanding of cultural differences required to function effectively in the situations prescribed - would be built into the syllabus and form part of the learning objective for each unit.

Within each unit of work, there would be scope for more able pupils to progress further, for example, by means of individual reading assignments or in the pursuit of 'project' information using foreign-language source material. At the higher levels, the specification for each of the skill areas would become progressively more complex and ambitious, probably based on authentic oral and printed texts, and moving always in the direction of greater autonomy in the handling of the language, especially in non-stereotyped and increasingly 'creative' productive use, with linguistic exchanges initiated by the learner, for example, instead of being limited to a narrow range of responses in 'predictable' contexts.

It will be apparent from the rudimentary examples cited above that we are only at the beginning of a very long road in attempting to dispense with fixed - and hence misleading - age-related, long-term goals. While average pupils may be able to cope with a range of objectives such as are spelt out above after two years of learning French, those with less aptitude and/or ability may only attain these objectives after perhaps three years, while the most able will have reached them (and covered a good deal of supplementary ground besides) much earlier. Only when much more experimentation has taken place nationally shall we have a reasonable idea of the full range of short-term, criterion-referenced objectives which may be relevant at various stages of the language-learning process.

Assessment must necessarily mirror course objectives, being designed as a realistic and balanced series of tasks which require the deployment of the skills specified within the contexts prescribed and which make use of a limited but representative sample of the linguistic material taught. It would be a mistake to over-emphasise this aspect and to become obsessive about testing, but a periodic check on learner-achievement at the end of specific units of work would seem to be indispensable to teacher and pupil alike, if only to ascertain the appropriateness and efficacy of objectives, methods and materials.

Our knowledge of language-testing techniques has grown steadily, with course-related tests such as the batteries devised for the Nuffield materials or those developed to accompany the ILEA Eclair course, showing how assessment can subserve the aims of instruction to become an organic part of the overall process. At present, internal school tests are often very imperfectly tailored to the ostensible aims of courses. Such features as excessive weight given to the written form, comprehension assessed in the foreign language rather than in English or by multiple-choice techniques, and an undue emphasis on morphology or syntax to the exclusion of meaning, appear all too frequently. We should be aiming instead to stress attainment and success by regular testing of performance in each of the skill areas being developed, as an integral part of the teaching cycle, in ways which accurately reflect course methods and objectives, thus giving a practical and functional edge to the whole enterprise. Individual pupil 'profiles' would then be built up from such criterion-referenced tests and form the basis of departmental record-keeping.

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To some extent the criticisms levelled at language teaching in schools have been justified, despite the onerous circumstances in which many language teachers have had to operate. However, since the Inspectorate initiated its survey of 83 comprehensive schools in 1975, more hard-won experience has accrued to modify both techniques and objectives. We now need to try to reduce the vast gap which exists between the best and most mediocre teaching and to attempt to mitigate the more pernicious effects which still persist as a legacy of the origins of our subject. Paradoxically, modern language work in schools requires both an overall broadening of perspective and a sharpening of linguistic objectives such as has already taken place in EFL and has long obtained for vocational language courses in further education, with more realistic aims, clearer objectives and more authentic material. Differentiated objectives will not of themselves produce any transformation, but they are a necessary condition to progress, which ultimately depends on a more deep-seated change in long-term aims and attitudes. In the same way, the active cultivation of appropriate operational language skills must lie at the heart of the teaching process and replace the accumulation of inert linguistic and grammatical matter where this still occurs, although we cannot afford to limit our brief solely to skill acquisition. The future of modern languages in schools as a universally accepted part of the general curriculum may ultimately depend on extraneous factors such as teacher supply over which we have little control, but in part at least it rests in our own hands.

From the welter of possibilities, two distinct scenarios emerge for language teaching in schools during the next decade: a move back towards modern language courses for the more able only, leading to languages seen as a minority pursuit (and divisive element) within the comprehensive curriculum; or the development of modern languages as a truly liberating experience for pupils across the whole ability range, leading to increased interest and involvement fuelled by positive motivation. The latter will only occur if we review our ultimate objectives and genuinely fit courses to children, abandoning the procrustean tendencies of the past. It must be recognised that a shift in emphasis need not mean a sacrifice of standards; indeed, by focussing on potential areas of strength, standards in some previously under-valued skill areas should be raised significantly. At present, by attempting too much, too vaguely, we fall far short of our expectations, even in respect of able pupils, so that as HMI discovered in most of the schools surveyed, 'achievement is in no way commensurate with the human and physical resources devoted to the work'.[3] This judgment reflects the most chastening aspect of a state of affairs which we recognise all too well. Perhaps we can begin to change things by focussing firmly - and objectively - on the art of the possible.

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3. What shall they learn to do?

Roy Dunning

The articles contained in this publication have to do with aspects of teaching modern languages to the whole ability range. I have chosen to entitle my contribution with the question upon which all education is predicated. Like all fundamental questions, it is subversive.

It is a well-known fact that the examined population of the first public examinations in modern languages does not represent the whole ability range. I am not here interested in accounting for, regretting or applauding the erosion of the original base; my purpose relates to the subversion implicit in my question: if we are serious in offering to all pupils (or nearly all pupils) the opportunity to learn a foreign language, then we have to face from the outset the question of the kind of assessment procedures we shall use to judge their performance.

Most public examinations are norm-referenced. Assumptions based on previously administered and standardised tests (ultimately an intelligence test) are made about the distribution of scores achieved by a normal population. Such scores plotted on a graph show the bell-shaped curve which is generally called the curve of normal distribution. A norm-referenced test assumes that the scores of the population to be examined will follow this distribution. If the population represents only a segment of the normal, the mark sheets can be adjusted to allow for this.

There is, of course, nothing suspect in this procedure, but it does have the built-in defect of being able only to relate candidates to one another in respect of their performance in the test; it has nothing to say about the performance itself. Any decision about the adequacy of that performance can be expressed only in terms of relativities. Statements in terms of grades of a fail/pass/distinction constitute purely statistical reference points showing levels within a hierarchy.

The widening of the opportunities to learn a foreign language requires a change in the assessment techniques in the direction of criterion-referenced examinations in which the expected behaviours of the candidates are specified and the criterial level of pass defined in operational terms. That is to say, the syllabus would specify exactly what the candidates were expected to be able to do - their behaviour - and also how well they were expected to be able to do it in order to pass. Such an approach - and the growth of interest in graded assessment procedures bears witness to the recognition of its value by teachers - would offer to all learners the prospect of some form of certification showing what they could do in the foreign language. It could be available at different levels, thus offering evidence of competence at whatever point the learner chose to discontinue his or her study of the foreign language. The advantage of the criterion approach is that it enables the task of the learner to be specified in terms of what he or she is going to learn to do. The grammatically defined syllabus simply lists the corpus of lexis and structures that the learner is expected to 'know' - a term the meaning of which does not emerge until the examination is completed.

Generally speaking, given the present examination system and the courses in vogue in schools, modern language teachers teach grammatical structures. For them, teaching has to do with the presentation of grammatical themes; learning, with saying and writing with respect to the models presented. If, however, we ask the question, 'What shall they learn to do?' the focus shifts to the learners doing something with and through the language they are learning. Such a shift requires a change from the grammatical to the functional model.

The construction of a functional model of language on which teachers (and, eventually, learners) can draw, is no easy task. Teachers (or syllabus designers) have to look at the functions available to the native speaker and make what they consider to be appropriate choices for the learners. Since it is obvious that the learners cannot replicate in the foreign language all the functions they have available as native speakers to the level and in the variety they have mastered them in their own language, the functional model to be constructed has to represent the best fit for the teacher's guesses about the future foreign language needs of his or her pupils.

The question of language needs is open to debate: there is no known way of deciding in advance whether any particular child will need to be able to express himself or herself, or understand other people expressing themselves, in a foreign language. The concept of need has to be part of the hypothesis that the pupil will have contact with the foreign country and its nationals during the school course. The language model to be built reflects the teacher's guesses about the possible contents of that contact. What the pupils learned would embody the uses of language they would be likely to make in the course of preparing for, and actually making, their contacts.

We might expect, for example, that the learners would need to understand the foreign language spoken to them in certain specific situations as at the Customs or in a café; that they might need to be able to tell the family they were visiting what food they didn't like, or how much they had enjoyed a meal, or what they ate in England, etc. From the forecast of the different kinds of contact requiring a use of the foreign language some idea of the content of the syllabus would be derived. However difficult such needs might prove to chart, a course based on their satisfaction would represent a welcome move away from the teaching of grammatical systems which do not refer to the use of language for specific human purposes.

To base language learning on the learner's needs thus conceived is to found the language course on a powerful fiction: that the learner expects and wishes to be involved with speakers of the foreign language to such a degree that his mastery of the language in question may be critical for the quality of his experiences. Such a fiction would obviously be broad enough to encompass whatever range of real contact was possible in the school - day trips, pen-friends, exchanges, etc.

A syllabus satisfying such needs cannot be constructed on purely grammatical lines. Human beings talk and write what they mean: they do not talk in the present tense of - ir verbs, or using only the dative case. The centre of such a syllabus must be communication in the foreign language - initially amongst British learners but eventually between British learners and foreign nationals. The reduction of the language needs of the language learner, however, to his putative requirements in a hypothetical situation is - even if those needs are minutely specified - a necessary, though not sufficient condition for the construction of a syllabus from which those needs might be satisfied. A syllabus which is oriented towards communication requires not only that communication within the foreign language take pride of place as an achievable aim, but also that the setting should be a communicative one; namely, that the teaching of the foreign language is such that the learner regards the foreign language classroom as a setting in which all exchange takes place in the foreign language. Although it may be true that a communicatively oriented syllabus does not prescribe a language teaching methodology, it must be patently obvious that some of our current procedures are incompatible with communicative aims.

Any discussion of a syllabus for the whole ability range does not mean a single syllabus for all learners, but it does imply a common framework for all. If we assume that - however the proportions differ - the future pattern of language study will not be radically different from the present (i.e. a basic course of two or three years followed by optional study), then it is inevitable that different learners will pursue their language studies for different lengths of time. Whether or not this leads teachers to devise courses with differentiated objectives, to fix different terminal dates for different ability groups, to set their classes or not, the activities engaged in by all learners, irrespective of course or ability level, ought to be conceived, and be seen to be conceived, within the same communicative framework.

I have made no reference to the 'four skills' because I doubt whether the distinction is a particularly useful one. No matter whether we are reading, listening, speaking or writing, each activity in which we are engaged seems to imply at least some of the others. Language testers, who are concerned with observable outcomes of language ability, have chosen to separate out the 'skills' as if they were discrete behaviours, but they are obliged to mix them for testing purposes - listening tests do not consist of listening only! If we move from testing 'skills' to testing the level of achievement of communicative objectives, then division of the activities undertaken into 'four skills' would appear to be quite irrelevant: communication is the observable accomplishment of a definable task - the resolution of uncertainty about meaning. Although I doubt whether communicatively oriented tasks could be set within the discrete framework, this does not mean that some tasks might not stress production and others comprehension. A communicatively conceived task seems inevitably to require more than one of the so-called 'skills'.

The undertaking of producing a communicative syllabus for the whole ability range bristles with thorny problems. Although such a syllabus would have to involve the learners in acquiring the language functions appropriate to the carrying out of certain exchanges of a purely transactional nature - such activities as, for example, shopping or asking for directions - it could scarcely be limited to them. If the language learner is to become an independent operator - surely an aim of any subject in education - his linguistic independence cannot be founded on the parrotted rememberings of a 'survival' course. Yet, if communication is to be at the centre of the new language universe, how may the learning be structured so that access to that independence is assured?

If we agree that in visiting a foreign country the learners have to learn to relate to a culture different to their own; to understand what is said to them;

and to make themselves understood by others, we are saying that they need to learn to function effectively in both an adult and an adolescent society. Suitable language functions have been listed by J van Ek;[1] and their exponents (i.e. the items of language implied) have been exemplified for French in Un niveau-seuil.[2]

The concept of function is relatively simple: it derives from the recognition that the same purpose may be achieved in language by using a variety of expressions. If, for example, at the dinner table I find I need the salt which is out of reach, I can say:

'Would you pass the salt, please?'
'Salt, please!'
'Can/could I trouble you for the salt?'
'Have you finished with the salt, please?'

- and, doubtless, further variants on the same theme. The circumstances in which I would use one form rather than another would undoubtedly vary; but they would all form part of the native speaker's repertoire of the language function of asking for a service to be rendered. It is, of course, important to notice that the function is not limited to the use of one set of lexical or structural components.

A glance at the list of functions listed by van Ek and at the variety of their exponents in Un niveau-seuil makes the daunting nature of the task apparent. Any communicative syllabus must assume that dialogue is the basic form of communication: the learners must expect to listen to the foreign language spoken by others, and to express themselves in that language. What, however, is a dialogue? Linguistic descriptions have isolated features which are characteristic of certain types of dialogues; but no description exists, or is likely to exist, which will permit the learners to generate an on-going dialogue on the basis of internalisation of its underlying rules. The simple fact is that dialogues are under the control of the speakers; and, as such, their rules are not amenable to predictive formulation. It may seem relatively easy to predict the language needed to carry out a transaction like buying a loaf of bread in the baker's, but it would be virtually impossible to predict even with that much certainty the content of a dialogue which had no intended outcome in the form of goods or services.

If, for example, the learners have been enabled to identify themselves and others (i.e. have mastered the function of self-identification), they also need to develop the facility to carry on the dialogue in a way which seems appropriate to them and/or their interlocutors. They obviously need to learn fairly early how to ask questions and how to use the responses to take the dialogue along; but, sooner or later, they will need to have language available to express the content they have within them as a result of their being personalities in their own right in this world. In a word, the learners have to learn to express their own autobiographies in the foreign language. They have to learn appropriate ways of expressing their own experiences of the past, their wishes and hopes for the future, and their feelings about the present.

The aim of linguistic independence for the learners; the communicative framework for learning; the language content for the expression of the learners' autobiographies - all of these seem to me to require that special attention be paid to the way the language is learned. I would argue that linguistic independence relates directly to the degree to which the learners have learned that language operates in systems; and have acquired the facility of using that knowledge of the systems to understand what they have not previously heard or seen before and to say or write what they have never previously said or written.

This concern for system is partly linguistic, partly pedagogic. The linguistic aspect would require the introduction of system into the teaching of the language functions. That is to say, whatever function was being learned, its exponents would be selected for their potential for systematic extension by the learners, and would be so practised in their extensions. I will try to offer some examples of this later.

As far as the pedagogic aspect goes, it would require the learning of reading and writing of the foreign language as an integral part of the course from the very beginning, irrespective of the role of reading and writing within a communicative perspective. It would be a serious error to restrict the activities of reading and writing to those commonly associated with the maintenance of communication. Both reading and writing are as important a part of the learning process for most children as they seem to be an obstacle to it for some. Part of the fixing process of modern language learning has to do with focussing on the systems of the language from as many view-points as possible. Reading and writing should be used to enable the learners to form and judge their own hypotheses about the way the language seems to work.

Let me try to make some aspects of this systematization more explicit. Amongst the exponents of the self-identification function, *Un niveau-seuil* lists the following: '*Je m'appelle Jean*.' '*Mon nom, c'est Jean*.'

It would clearly be possible to teach either or both of these forms in such a way that they constituted the only uses the learners were expected to make of the components of the structures. Clearly, the possessive adjective is used in other contexts too. The requirement for systematic extension, however, would examine the structures for their potential for useful manipulation - question forms, alternative subject pronouns, for example - offered by the components. Would the learners be able economically to learn more or fewer meanings if one set were chosen rather than the other? Would there be a case for learning one set earlier than the other? Might one set be learned for productive and the other for receptive use? These are some of the questions which relate to the problem of systematic re-use.

It might be thought that systematic learning was synonymous with learning paradigms; this is not so. There is no reason why the learners should not learn to appreciate the formal systems of the language, but there is equally no compulsion requiring them to learn early what he can never use. Suppose, for example, that the verb *s'appeler* had been chosen as the base for the self-identification function mentioned above. It is quite obvious that in any appropriate communicative activity (e.g. one in which the learners were identifying themselves and one another in class) the form *tu t'appelles* is more likely to appear as a question, e.g. '*Tu t'appelles Jean/comment*?' rather than in the declarative form. It would be equally obvious that the form *nous nous appelons* would not appear at all. The most important aspect of system is also functional - it being generally agreed that systematic learning is more efficient and enduring - namely, to achieve the maximum effect with the greatest economy of means. This means that the teacher should concentrate on those bits of language with the highest potential for use and re-use.

Let us take a functional approach to a theme like negation. Many course books list the negatives in French in the same course unit. This lumps together ne ... pas/ne ... plus/ne ... guère/(ne) ... personne, etc despite the considerable differences in meaning and structure that they reveal. The distribution of the items makes it clear that they are not equally frequent in spoken or written French: ne ... guère and ne ... point seem little used (and, therefore, scarcely worth learning early, if at all); ne ... pas and ne ... plus share a structural similarity but are radically different in their meaning implications; il n'y a personne is at a different level of style from personne n'est venu, and so on.

Whereas the grammatical syllabus lists and presents these very different items together, a functional view would need to look at the various ways in which negation relates to human purposes and is expressed in language. A decision would have to be made about the relationship of various exponents of the function to different levels and styles in language. On this basis it is likely that what the grammar book lists together would appear spread over various units of a communicative course, some being restricted to comprehension and others having no part to play at all. Once a decision had been reached on which exponents should be taught with which units of the syllabus, the need for systematic extensibility would ensure that what was presented to be learned was not a mere reach-me-down compendium of handy negative phrases but a structured initiation into the potential of the system concerned. If, for example, the first use of the negative occurred in connection with the self-identification function, we would expect the pupil to be able to handle the positive and negative responses to such questions as: 'Combien tu as de frères/sœurs?' 'Combien tu as de frères/sœurs/ain-(e)s/cadet(te)s?' 'Ton père/ta mère/il/elle/a combien de frères/soeurs?' 'Tu as combien de tantes/oncles?' etc.

We would also expect the structure to be extended systematically to include previously learned language, whether it related to the self-identification function or not.

It goes without saying that the structure would re-emerge appropriately in the practice of other functions throughout the course.

If we turn now to the kind of activities implied by a communicative approach to language learning, it will be evident that the whole potential for interpersonal exchange in the classroom must be used. Although modern language learning needs teacher-direction, any class in which the range of language activities was restricted to those channelled through the teacher could scarcely be called communicative. What is required is the opening up of all the possible lines of communication in the classroom: teacher-pupil, pupil-teacher, pupil-pupil, whether on an individual or small/large group basis.

The interpretation of a communicative syllabus that I have offered suggests a possible framework within which the language of the relevant functions might take place:

(a) systematic presentation by the teacher in a communicative setting of the language components to be learned

(b) teacher-directed activities to ensure the control of the language presented

(c) pair/small group activities, varying from teacher-directed to autonomously functioning, to practise the function itself.

A teacher conducting his class in this way would find himself changing his role in the course of it from mediating all exchanges through himself to facilitating exchanges between others. Amongst other things it would permit a more realistic interpretation of the role of error in language learning.

One of the consequences of the adoption of a grammatically-based syllabus is the preoccupation with grammatical accuracy: what is formally correct is valued more highly than what is meaningfully communicated. As a corollary of this, teachers and pupils see grammar as the systematic framework upon which meanings depend rather than as part of the systematic framework within which meanings are exchanged. This concern for formal accuracy lies at the base of the meaningless exercises which abound in current textbooks.

It seems to me that the framework I have outlined offers a shift of focus in learning, moving from language which is systematically accurate to language which is situationally appropriate. During the learning of the systems, considerable effort would need to be expended by the teacher to achieve the grammaticality of the system; grammatical accuracy - the grasp of the concept behind the workings of the system - would be the object of the exercise. Later, where the practice of the communicative function itself was the issue, the use by the learners for communicative purposes of these learned grammatical systems would inevitably put that learning at risk. At this stage where the exchange of meanings was in focus, one would tolerate a much higher level of phonological or grammatical error on the part of the learners, provided that the inaccuracy did not impede communication. During the course of the work on the unit the learners would therefore shift their concerns from acquiring the language systems involved to using them to achieve communication. In the latter - heresy though it be - grammatical accuracy plays but a minor part.

This last point needs perhaps to be reinforced: in order to achieve communication, albeit in simulated, classroom-bound activities, the learners have to have the opportunity to do a number of different things.

They have first to learn the systems they will need in order to be able to say what they are going to say. Secondly, they have to have the chance to practise those systems to some agreed level of mastery. Thirdly, they have to be required to use their own linguistic resources to achieve their own purposes - which means exposure to error of all systems learned. It seems to me unlikely that learners can ever develop the facility to make dialogues in accordance with their own intentions unless they have the opportunity to do just that in class.

I have tried to suggest that if modern language teaching is to respond effectively to the demands of language learning for all, it must change its perspective from the learning of the grammatical systems of the language to the acquisition of the systems of communication. I have further expressed my view that such a change cannot be satisfied by reducing language learning to the mastery of a tourist phrase book. The change has to include that concern for process and system without which very little learning of value can take place. I have no illusions about the difficulty of the task; I am equally convinced that it is in that direction that we must go.

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4. Organisation, syllabus & materials

Duncan Sidwell

This chapter discusses the main organisational questions facing a department, how far it is possible for a department to create a syllabus, and how the content of that syllabus can most efficiently be conveyed to the students. The content of the syllabus and methodology relating to it are all important, but before these can be decided upon, the aims of the department, the organisation of classes, and the emphasis in the department's teaching have to be established. There are therefore two principal steps to be taken:

(1) To produce a document which describes the general aims of the department, the organisation of the teaching groups and the courses or the emphases to which these give rise. This document can also give indications of methodology and working procedures. It will be available as a public document to the head teacher and other teachers in the school.

(2) To produce a description of the content of the various courses and stages (the syllabus), and details of the actual materials to be used (schemes of work). These two main elements - the syllabus and schemes of work - are of course closedly inter-related. For example, one syllabus heading may be 'How to describe myself', part of what Roy Dunning has called 'the self-identification function'. The scheme of work would specify the language content involved in describing oneself, some notes on the situations in which the language of description can best be used, and perhaps an assessment test to be used when the unit has been completed. This will obviously require an organised system for the storing of the resources involved, and this will also be discussed below.

DOCUMENT ONE: AIMS, ORGANISATION AND METHODOLOGY

Aims

This document will be made available to the school governors, the head teacher, other teachers, parents and perhaps students, and in it the aims of the department need to be made clear, however briefly stated. They will include the argument that all children should be given the opportunity to begin the study of a foreign language, and that, through the learning of that language, learning of a wider nature may be achieved. Some means of fostering such wider learning could be mentioned here also, e.g. school exchanges, visits, French or German days, etc.

Organisation

Each school has its own organisation which constrains the ideal organisation for languages, so that one simple pattern is not possible. It is, however, possible to isolate factors relevant to all situations and, by looking at these, to come to the appropriate local solution. Clearly, in every school there are children of differing linguistic ability, maturity and motivation to language learning. Certain decisions have to be made which follow from these differences among children, and answers found to questions such as the following:

(1) Should all children begin the study of a language at 11+?
Although 11+ is taken as a base age, it is recognised that many middle schools exist with starting ages earlier or later than 11. Decisions in such cases must be made in the light of the resources available. This is a judgement of value which a head of department would make in consultation with the head teacher and about which little need be said here. Quite clearly, however, in a comprehensive school there is a desire on the part of almost all pupils and parents for the study of a foreign language to be begun.

(2) Should students be put in sets, and if so, for how long?
Although general performance in the primary school and verbal IQ may serve as a guide, the sheer variety of abilities and motivation in children is such that a division into sets on a basis other than assessment of performance in the foreign language is not adequate; the shorter the period of assessment the more unreliable it will be. This needs to be balanced against the unlikelihood of mixed-ability teaching over a long period being appropriate to the learning needs of the most and of the least able students. Given a choice, many departments would go for setting after one or two years depending partly on the skill of the staff in teaching such groups, and partly on the materials used for teaching. It follows from this decision that a department must develop a one- or two-year course for a wide range of ability, and follow it with an adequate diagnostic test.

(3) Should later courses differ, and if so, how?
Once setting has taken place it is logical to differentiate the courses. Departments will have to decide how many courses they can offer, and what sort of content they should have. Broadly speaking, schools could think in terms of three courses. These would be differentiated in part by content, and in part by the type of activity used in the learning. The courses for the most able and those of middle ability would probably have more in common with each other than either would have with the course for the least able, where there might perhaps be a higher level of background work, providing additional context and support for the language study. The course for the least able need not be seen as a terminal one, of course, but what is taught should be useful in itself rather than being a part of a long-term study; it is entirely possible that, given appropriate courses, children in this group would wish to continue with some study of a foreign language to the age of 16.

(4) At what point should an option choice be given?
The choice to give up or continue the foreign language is often offered at the same time as the general option choices, usually at 14+, although for those who learn languages more slowly, this choice is frequently offered earlier. One of the factors which will influence choice - apart from the quality of experience in the first few years of learning - will be the type of courses which are offered for continuation. The descriptions of these courses need to be precise. It may not mean a great deal to a 14-year-old to be told that a particular course leads to a particular examination. Exactly what is involved in the run-up to that examination needs to be made clear to the students, in terms of performance skills.

Courses which begin at this point also need describing, as well as continuation courses. Thus one would find continuation courses of various sorts, e.g. language only, French/German/Spanish Studies, European Studies, a language course with a CSE lower grade ceiling, and so on. Each is possible. It is important also that a 16+ examination should be chosen which reflects the aims and methods of the department, rather than simply using the one from the examination board used by the rest of the school.

(5) What about 16+ courses?
After the 16+ examination has been taken, the possibilities are to offer 'A' level and 'O' level, A/O's, the Institute of Linguists' examinations, such examinations as are now being offered in languages related to business studies, or non-examination courses for those who wish to continue their language study. Provision depends upon the size of the establishment, of course.

The pattern of courses in a school or grouping of schools or colleges in the period 11-18+ could be set out in a form such as this:

Courses offered in each year

<table>
<tr><th>Year</th><th colspan="6"></th></tr>
<tr><td>7</td><td>'A' level French/ German</td><td>'O' level German/ Spanish/etc</td><td colspan="2">Inst. of Linguists Prelim./ Grade I</td><td>French Continuation</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>7 periods</td><td>5 periods</td><td colspan="2">5 periods</td><td>2 periods</td><td>'O' level retake</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>'O' level French</td><td>CSE (1) French</td><td>CSE (2) French</td><td>European Studies</td><td>French Studies</td><td>'O' level/CSE German/Spanish</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>'O' level French</td><td>CSE (1) French</td><td>CSE (2) French</td><td>European Studies</td><td>French Studies</td><td>'O' level/CSE German/Spanish</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td colspan="2">Course A</td><td colspan="3">Course B</td><td>Course C</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td colspan="2">Course A</td><td colspan="3">Course B</td><td>Course C</td></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td colspan="6">French. Mixed-ability groups</td></tr>
</table>

Methodology

The attitudes to language learning and teaching which the department encourages will also form an important part of this public document. Such a statement has value, too, as a general reminder to staff, and can be of great value to new and probationary teachers, and to the foreign language assistant.[1] The elements involved might include the following:

(a) Conversationally-based teaching.
Encouragement must be given to plentiful conversational use of the language in the classroom, with an emphasis on meaningful talk and an avoidance of undue artificiality in question and answers. (Attention to such meaningfulness in the classroom would also extend, of course, to writing.)

(b) Use of the foreign language.
This follows on from the previous point. Heads of department (HoDs) need to encourage the use of foreign language in class at all levels. To this end it may be necessary for the HoD to prepare, with the help of the foreign language assistant, or other native speakers, a list of the most commonly used classroom phrases, indicating how to express such things as the notation system, praise or blame in varying degrees, or the various everyday phrases used regularly in the classroom.

(c) Guidance on homework and learning.
The frequency and extent of homework should be noted and some guidance given to teachers on the learning tasks most appropriate.

(d) Variety of presentation.
HoDs may wish to state that they use a variety of presentation techniques in language learning, and to define them in detail. The reason for this is that learning strategies vary, and that children in general learn best when a variety of stimuli are properly used.

(e) Encouragement of children.
There is a need to avoid creating nervous attitudes in children in their exploratory use of language, and HoDs may wish to state ways to avoid this. Some linguistic errors are not very important. In discussion within the department, teachers can develop strategies by which they can bring an appreciation of the relative importance of certain mistakes to students, and can decide on their attitude to error in written work.

(f) Record keeping.
The system of record-keeping within the department should be noted, and related both to the regular assessments which would be part of the schemes of work, and to the marking schemes adopted for class and homework. This will be crucial when considering transfer of pupils between sets.

(g) Departmental responsibilities.

Whilst not overburdening this section of the document with details of who does what, it is necessary for certain functions to be allocated to various members of the department - responsibility for the stationery, care of equipment, responsibility for liaison with other schools, storing and care of resources, etc - all need to be known. These responsibilities might rotate between members of the department or vary with changes in staff. For this reason it may not be appropriate to give details of this organisation in this document, unless (as is desirable) the syllabus is seen as a document likely to be rewritten continuously.

DOCUMENT TWO: THE SYLLABUS AND SCHEMES OF WORK

I have suggested that there should be a diagnostic period for pupils, followed by differentiated courses. Each course needs to have a reasonably specific content if 'differentiated courses' is to have any meaning. There needs also to be a differentiation of method - this is perhaps the most important difference. In many schools this will be partially provided by course books, but no commercial course answers the sensitive teacher's needs all the time for all classes. Such courses tend either to be too narrow or too broad, and do not always correspond to the needs and likes of young learners. Editing, avoiding, and adding are necesary all the time. Some course book language is also artificial, and situations can be found in them which are of little interest to young people. Teachers therefore have to create materials. What should be the general principles on which such creation should be based?

It is vital to be as precise as possible about what the learner should be able to do when the particular unit or lesson has been completed. It would be vain to pretend that this does not present formidable difficulties. As learning becomes more advanced, the content and the mode of the learning become more complex. The teacher has to think about how a particular linguistic element is to be known and how this knowledge is to be expressed. New thoughts about language learning and teaching have to be continually taken into account in this process.

There is at present no completely adequate theory for the teaching and learning of languages, and most teachers use a variety of methods, not sticking to one particular theory. What can be said, however, is that much school-based language learning has been about language rather than being the use of language and that this emphasis needs changing.

Syllabuses and course books have in general been based on a grammatical progression. This has gone together with a belief that language acquisition is largely a matter of habit formation. This view (often termed 'behaviourist') underlies the pure audio-visual or audio-lingual method, emphasising repetition and presentation of language in a grammatical progression. The weaknesses of such a view are clear when it is used for teaching less able students - it tends to postpone meaningful communication and to cause boredom. It tends also to rely on reported events (i.e. a predominant use of the third person) which are often at one remove from the reality of the child's life.

A strong grammatical progression has attractions from the teacher's point of view, but as Wilkins puts it, 'one of the dangers in basing a course on a systematic presentation of the elements of linguistic structures is that forms will tend to be taught because they are there, rather than for the value that they will have for the learner'.[2]

If we look at more recent theories of language learning we find stress is laid on the actual use in everyday life which we make of the language. These newer theories imply that the learners should come into contact with a wide range of linguistic data and that they should be encouraged to make attempts to communicate, even if mistakes are involved. The underlying belief is that the learners acquire a language best by doing some of the organising of that language themselves, and that this learning is most effective if the students are aided by its being meaningfully presented. This meaningfulness may be brought into the learning in a number of ways - by looking at the learners' needs, by creating situations, using topics or themes, by looking at what people actually do say, and how people express their wishes, their likes and so on. The main point in organising language learning in this way is that the emphasis is shifted to the learners' practical use of the language. Communication is the basis of the learning process which thus becomes more motivating. Also, the resulting language may be less concerned with reported events about the doings of third persons, and be rather more first person-orientated.

If, as seems clear, the evidence is in favour of the latter theories, schools (and text-book writers) should take heed of it. A problem for the teacher is that although from his or her teaching experience he or she has an almost intuitive sense of the ordering of the grammatically linear syllabus, there is little experience of how to organise the language situations, topics or notions into formal elements or semantic groupings, or of grading syntax without loss or distortion of meaning. The problem is: how does one keep track of the structures that have been taught in a syllabus based on communication needs rather than on a grammatical progression?

The main difficulty to be resolved is the grammatical progression which must still exist in syllabuses which are based on situations, topics, notions, etc. The grammar of a foreign language needs to be known by the learner in two ways - it needs to be used practically in the conveying of meaning (i.e. 'I was' as opposed to 'I am' or 'I shall be') and it - or parts of it - also needs to be known as a theoretical framework which will allow the learner to make generalisations in order to use totally new structures.

The ability to establish these two modes varies with age and ability. You wish a child, for example, to be able to say je voudrais quite early (without knowing that this is the conditional tense), but the question has to be solved about when Nous voudrions comes in, and when the child should know that it is a conditional tense. In a grammatically linear course both of these forms, and the descriptions of them, would tend to be taught when one of them is met for the first time. This causes overburdening to many learners which may prevent them from generalising. The teacher clearly must give the learning a grammatical framework, but the point at which the grammatical explanation is needed varies according to the age, the subject-matter being taught, and the individual's ability.

To help in the solution of this problem, the content of the learning has to be presented in two stages:

- First, a *syllabus* will list the situations, topics, themes, etc which will be dealt with at various stages in the various courses.

- Second, *schemes of work* should be prepared for as many of those elements as possible, detailing the language content, the resources, and the types of activity which a teacher may need in order to teach each particular unit.

Bearing in mind the elements which have been discussed above, how should departments go about evolving a syllabus?

THE FIRST YEAR

For first-year groups which are mixed-ability or roughly banded by ability, there is much commercially produced material at present available, most of it suitable insofar as the learning load is concerned, only for some of the top 20% to 30% of children. Where suitably designed materials cannot be bought or where these are found to be insufficient, the first-year syllabus can be constructed using some of the following elements as a basis:

(a) myself, my age, my looks, what I wear, where I live, a description of my house, my room, my family, my likes and dislikes

(b) my day, my school

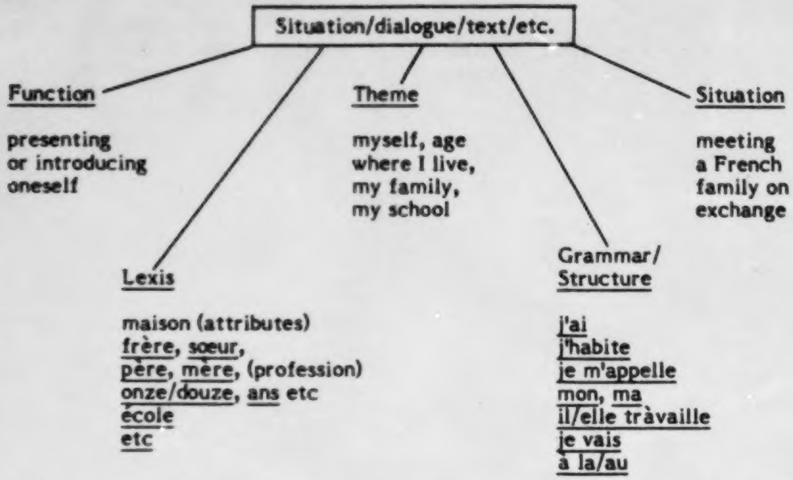
(c) my town or village, where things are, how I get there, how I can tell you

(d) asking for things, and putting questions generally - for example, in shops and at home

(e) going to places and doing things. This could include a fictitious or a known town, and also involve a variety of lexis and structures, e.g. the weather, the time (some of which would have certainly been established in earlier work).

For each of these elements *a scheme of work* needs to be produced to include what the child is expected to say and the extent of the grammatical knowledge required - for example, the system of the *-er* verbs would be very likely to be learned, but not perhaps the whole of *aller* or *s'appeler*. Skeletons of short conversations can be given in the work scheme, in which children ask each other their ages, where they live, and later, in the familiar shopping situations, where they are going, what they are buying, etc. Role-playing situations can also be suggested, and are important from the earliest stages.

When new small units are being made up, the following type of schema is helpful:



Situation/dialogue/text/etc.

Function

presenting
or introducing
oneself

Theme

myself, age
where I live,
my family,
my school

Situation

meeting
a French
family on
exchange

Lexis

maison (attributes)
frère, sœur,
père, mère, (profession)
onze/douze, ans etc
école
etc

Grammar/ Structure

j'ai
j'habite
je m'appelle
mon, ma
il/elle tràvaille
je vais
à la/au

This schema could also be used for the written work in which case the situation could be the writing of a letter, and the grammar/structure element could include question forms allowing a child to ask a pen friend about himself or herself.

The successful use of such units depends in good measure upon the storing and availability of the materials which go with them, and the implications of schemes of work for such storing and accessibility will be developed later.

The scheme of work should also contain details of assessments. These must, of course, be in the same terms as the teaching, the syllabus and the schemes of work, encouraging performance goals rather than too much theoretical knowledge, and should involve oral as well as written performance.

THE SECOND AND THIRD YEARS

I mentioned earlier that in a setted organisation, three types of course are called for. These courses are ideally differentiated more by the type of activity and extent of content, than by the type of content, as all should be based on the aim of functional language use.

The more able learner

The more able learner will probably follow a published course, but too much reliance on many available courses can lead to the neglect of the communicative types of exercise necessary to language learning and which, evidence suggests, good language learners like best.[3] Above all, a good language learner at school wants to be able to speak the language and an over-emphasis on answering questions on texts, for example, will not on its own produce this conversational ability. The department should therefore seek to continue the policy of the First Year, either blending it in with the course or replacing the course, of ensuring continued attention to everyday situations and everyday language use. The syllabus should therefore detail, in addition to the course book used, a descriptive list of situations and topics extending from Year 1, for example:

- leisure activities (spare time, evenings, holidays, what others do, what one did yesterday, what one is going to do tomorrow)
- work activities (oneself, the family, other occupations)
- travelling and finding out information
- expressing likes and dislikes, apologising, learning how to cope with the problems of understanding (how to ask people to repeat what they have said, to speak more slowly, etc)
- using the telephone
- writing letters, etc.

Again, materials relating to all these topics should be prepared as units and made available in the storage system, with references to resources available, and with suggestions for introducing each item or topic.

It is also vital that types of activity should be specified in detail and kept in mind and in practice by teachers. These types of activity, again, depend upon the age and stage of the students, but the following are offered as a check list which can serve even beyond the second and third years in many cases:

(a) holding a conversation

(b) answering specific, information-seeking questions

(c) extracting information to be noted down

  from material which is heard
  from material which is read
  from people in conversation

(d) note taking

  in the target language
  in the native language

(e) writing as description, as narrative, or as reporting

(f) writing for pleasure - games, rhymes, invented songs, stories

(g) writing for a purpose - letters, notes to parents about events, activities

(h) reading for pleasure and amusement - stories and poems

(i) singing, and playing games

(j) giving brief gist-translations

(k) studying language systems, i.e. grammar notes.

Clearly, the most able linguists will perform these activities to a depth which the less able will not attain, and perhaps some are inappropriate for the less able learners, but in differentiating courses it is probably much more appropriate to think in terms of differentiating types of activity than content, although this will obviously be affected.

The average learner

One of the problems of a grammatically based course, for the learner of average ability, is that the slower the progress, the greater the boredom and frustration for both teacher and student. With situation-, topic- or notion-based syllabuses, there is much more room for manoeuvre. Communication can take place, although its complexity and range may be restricted. In this second-level course, topics can be treated which are to some extent parallel to those in the more rapidly moving course, although they would be covered in a more restricted way. This implies an agreement within the department as to the appropriate language in a unit.

Where a course book is being used there may well be far too much vocabulary presented, for example, and teachers should attempt to specify the important vocabulary. It is also necessary for teachers to decide which formal grammar elements are most important, as was suggested above. Probationary teachers, in particular, often find it difficult to know which elements are important, as published courses tend to give a wide range of formal examples at the same time - as Roy Dunning suggests, for instance, when the negatives are introduced in French, one often finds far more than one needs. Departmental discussion of such problems, a note about them in the scheme of work, and a list of the formal elements to be concentrated on (which are surprisingly few over a year or two) are vital in differentiating the courses.

The nature of classroom activity for average learners will not be quite the same as in the course for the most able. There may be greater tolerance of error, shorter exercises and greater concretisation of examples (because the conceptualising powers of the children will probably be less), with a more restricted input of formal grammar.

The less able learner

The children who have most difficulty in learning a foreign language often have as much interest in learning it as any others - at least at first. Their rate of absorption of new material is slow and they require more help to see language patterns than those following other courses. Because of this, the presentation of grammatical categories is of very limited value, and the course must be firmly based on small units which allow action and extension, using both visual and English-based resources. There is again no reason at all why the first year syllabus should not be extended for this group to include the topics mentioned above for their peers, but the manner of teaching and extension will not be the same. It may be helpful in the organisation of the work for this group, particularly for the two or three years of their course before options are taken, for the work to be seen as a series of units. The six terms involved could be divided into smaller units, each with a specific purpose, in which the non-foreign language work should have a justifiable educational value and should attempt to support and enhance the child's motivation towards language learning.[6] The foreign language and background topics may include shops, travelling, geography, holidays, sports, home and school life, and perhaps a little history. It is helpful to teachers to specify the time to be spent on these items.

As far as the language scheme of work for this course is concerned, it is very important to include examples of the type of exercise appropriate. These should be restricted in scope and, above, all, allow children to manipulate language without too many variables. The following sorts of language exercise are particularly appropriate to this course:

- finding the correct answer from two or three examples
- true or false
- putting the halves of sentences together (printed sentences 'torn' in half)
- making up sentences from blocks of part sentences
- choosing words to fit a particular context
- the interpretation of signs
- what is the English for . . . . ?
- what is the French for . . . . ?
- aural exercises connected with the time, and using money, i.e. simple and definite things which a child can isolate in an aural exercise
- listening exercises using some of the techniques mentioned above
- practical activities (meeting each other, asking the way, giving instructions, doing the shopping, buying a soft drink, enquiring after information, travelling, talking about the locality, the weather, making suggestions for activities, and so on, using role play).

In this course it is essential that there should be an emphasis on visual presentation, careful exposition and practical experience. Particularly careful attention has to be given also to the English-based materials, as it is often the case that the amount of English used in these resources is too much. Hence special background materials may have to be developed, simplifying existing materials, perhaps.

THE FIRST THREE YEARS AND LATER

The first three years have been dealt with at length partly because they pose the major problem, and partly because they are the foundation for later work. The most essential aspect of the work in these three years is that teachers should think in terms of types of activity. It is also above all in these three years that schemes of work can be evolved in reasonable detail. There is not space here to discuss the same questions in relation to ab initio courses from the age of 14, or 16, for example. The principles will however remain the same, although later schemes of work for continuation courses, and for courses which begin after options, will tend to point to certain resources rather than to be the resources themselves, and will again give details of types of activity to be included. The post-third year and post-16+ courses will need to draw on an ever wider range of general foreign language materials and types of activity until, in the sixth form, very wide themes replace the simple situations of the early years. This progression from situations to themes may be seen as a broadening from year one onwards.

This broadening of scope brings out one of the central points relating to syllabus and schemes of work - the physical organisation of the materials so that they are easily available to the staff, and so that they correspond to the levels required.

STAFF AND OTHER RESOURCES

The schemes outlined above require a co-operative effort from the department. Tasks need to be shared out, because no one teacher can do the job satisfactorily alone. At the same time, a system of storing material produced (worksheets, books, slides, etc) must be worked out. This will depend upon the physical conditions which obtain, but the following could be aimed at:

(a) 'Master copy' folders
One or more ring binders for each course, to contain an outline of the syllabus, an index of units, an indication of what ancillary sources can be used with each unit. There would also be indications of the types of activity to be used in the classroom. One copy of each of the worksheet resources should also be included, or be placed in a separate special folder.

(b) General worksheet resources
The master-copy system is again required, based on grammatical categories, syllabus units, chapters of a book, etc. From this source the teachers can gain ideas and help as they present units of work.

(c) An index
To the television, radio and other taped and visual material which is available.

(d) An assessment file
For all stages of courses, including naturally, the public examinations.

(e) Storage systems
Which are easily accessible for: OHP transparencies, worksheets, tape recordings, television and radio, filmstrips, readers, ancillary published materials in the foreign language, background materials at various levels.

These storage systems may be divided up according to the level of material, or the year in which the resources are to be used. Categories might be titled as follows, for instance:

Year Three: (Course A) Essay material.
Year Two: (Course A/B) Easy reading comprehensions.
Year Two: (Course C) Material for background (travel).

'A' level themes. Newspaper extracts.

It saves an enormous amount of work if staff combine on tasks, and if the materials which are produced are properly stored and permanently available in this way.

It is also essential for a department to meet regularly to discuss particular problems in the courses, to decide the division of work, and to suggest timings for the units' completion and their readiness for the rest of the department to use. Such organisation calls upon the HoD to have skills of management and foresight. Much of the scheme of work for a course or part of a course is actually contained in the manner in which resources are made available and mutually discussed. Continuity in teaching and co-ordination between courses simply cannot be carried through without this back-up organisation, for the more accurate the teacher's picture of what he or she wishes to achieve over a week or over a period of weeks, the more likely it is that the children will learn something of value, and that any assessment will correspond to the learning which has taken place.

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5. Listening

Peter Wheeldon

INTRODUCTION

If, over the past ten to fifteen years, attitudes to and the aims of language teaching and testing have undergone many changes, these changes are most clearly discerned in the ever increasing importance given to the aural/oral aspects of language. This represents much more than a mere shift of emphasis from the grammar-translation skills of reading, writing and translating to a more equal balance of all four skills for the sake of some sort of equality of treatment. It illustrates clearly the change in attitude from learning a language as a 'code', for its own sake, as a 'thing' in its own right, as a logical and abstract exercise largely divorced from the people who speak it, to a study, not so much of German or French, but rather of the German speaker or French speaker, a shift to an awareness of the social and psychological aspects of language, of language for communication, for meeting people, for talking and listening to them. We have moved from the study of a foreign language (L2) in a vacuum to the study of an L2 as it happens, in action in its social context.

These shifts in attitude have necessarily brought about increased interest in the activities of listening and speaking, the very activities impossible to isolate from the speakers engaged in them. Nearly all L2 teaching courses published today are considered incomplete unless accompanied by sets of tapes as an integral part of the language teaching programme. This has led to an increase in the language heard by our learners. Learning an L2 has come to involve the ear as well as the eye as an entry point to the mind. The above changes in aims and activities have necessarily brought about many changes in methods, particularly with regard to the early school years. The growth in course materials with listening components has quickly followed the increase in knowledge about what is believed to be involved in the activity of listening. The listening components, for example, of the Nuffield courses En Avant, Vorwärts, etc are influenced by the findings of theoretical, applied and psycho-linguistics.

This chapter sets out to discuss the aural/oral aspects of L2 teaching in our schools, giving special emphasis to the listening skill. It is, however, extremely difficult, and also undesirable, to isolate the listening skill entirely from other language activities, since all types of language activity interact, supporting and enlightening each other in the total language-learning process.

This chapter is divided into two parts, the first dealing with general and theoretical considerations, the second dealing with pedagogical and practical considerations:

PART 1 - GENERAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

a) The Nature of the Listening Skill

Listening is a complex activity in which many things happen simultaneously inside the mind. It is not only complex, it is also far more difficult than many teachers and pupils suspect. Attentive listening seems to involve:

- taking in a stream of more or less continuous sound
- recognising units within this stream of sound
- recognising meanings which these units are believed to have
- recognising/appreciating the relationships between these units
- retaining these semantic relationships, whilst
- continuing to 'decode' the stream of sound assailing the ears
- modifying on the basis of further decoding the meaning ascribed to previously decoded sound
- perceiving the physical and psychological features in which the utterances are made
- judging which features are relevant and which are not
- interpreting the speaker's attitude to what he or she is saying
- adopting an attitude to what is being listened to
- judging it
- reacting to it
- seeing and interpreting speaker's facial expressions, paralanguage, etc.

This seems to be what we all experience when we communicate in the mother tongue (L1). How many of the above elements, and what others come into play at any one time, depends on the context of the listening. For example, if one is listening to a tape, record or radio programme, where the speaker is neither seen by nor personally known to the listener, the last elements are not so relevant. On the other hand, if the listener can see and has personal knowledge of the speaker, then these non-linguistic elements may well be the most important features the listener will attend to.

Even the youngest L2 learner has the ability to do all of the above to some degree in his L1. In the L2 the listener is at a great disadvantage because he or she

(1) is unfamiliar with the sounds of the L2

(2) is unfamiliar with the groupings of the sounds (word boundaries)

(3) is unable to, or is just learning to, read in the L2

(4) has not yet been exposed to enough language to learn all or most of the possible sound combinations

(5) has no experience of listening to a variety of speakers

(6) is deprived of the relevant situational features in which the speaking takes place. Often, in fact, the pupil is required from listening to a tape to determine what these situational features are.

Hence, in the case of listening comprehension exercises like this:

'Bonjour, Madame.'
'Bonjour, Monsieur, deux flûtes et six croissants, s'il vous plaît.'

The listener is asked if this conversation takes place in a) a music shop, b) a baker's shop, c) a busy street, d) an arithmetic class. In the classroom everything depends on the pupil's knowing flûte/croissants. In the real situation the pupil only requires to understand deux and/or six in order to discover what flûtes and croissants are. The real listening situation may often be easier than the classroom one.

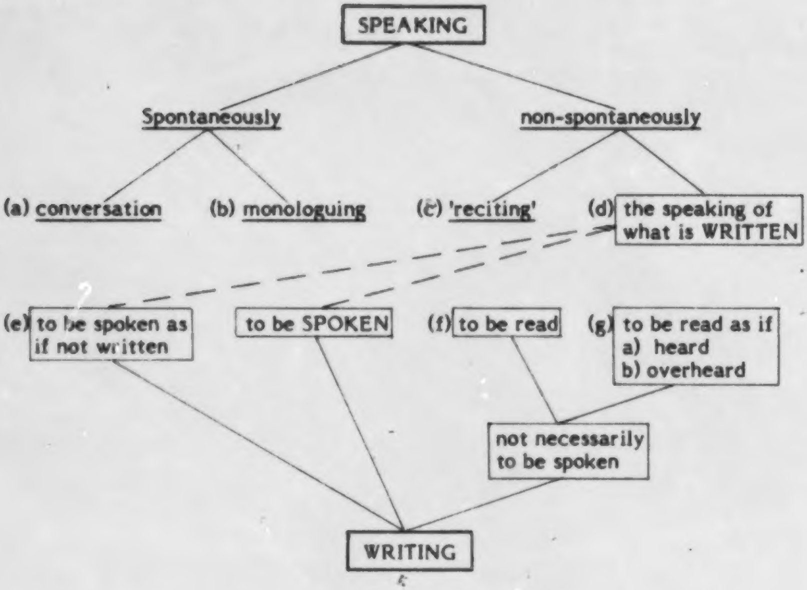
(7) is given a pedagogically 'doctored' speech to listen to. This has, of course, many advantages, but also some crippling disadvantages. Such pedagogical speech is shorn of all, or at best, of most of its redundant elements, which makes the message denser. The pupil has less time to decode and gets lost and gives up. There is too much to process in too short a time.

(8) by definition, has limited knowledge of the structure of the L2 which would enable him or her to predict what language is likely to follow. The learner can seldom, if ever, get 'ahead' of the speaker and often lags so far behind that communication breaks down completely.

It is important for teachers to keep on learning as much as possible about the nature of the listening skill and the limitations and difficulties of the learners. Only in this way can teachers improve their strategies for creating in the classroom the conditions most favourable to the development of the listening skill in the pupils.

b) What kind of language should we listen to?

It seems fatuous to state that pupils can only listen to that which has been spoken, but this obvious statement does not take account of the conditions under which 'that which has been spoken' was produced. The diagram opposite aims to show the various possibilities of spoken language available to the teacher.[1]


SPEAKING
Spontaneously
non-spontaneously
(a) conversation
(b) monologuing
(c) 'reciting'
(d) the speaking of what is WRITTEN
(e) to be spoken as if not written
to be SPOKEN
(f) to be read
(g) to be read as if a) heard b) overheard
not necessarily to be spoken
WRITING

(a) is real, unscripted conversation

(b) real, scripted monologues

(c) refers to preliterate societies, and need not concern us here

(d) non-spontaneous monologuing - this is the speaking of what has been written in order to be spoken without the pretence that it never had been written, e.g. talks, news bulletins, station announcements, etc

(e) non-spontaneous dialogue, i.e. the speaking of what has been written but spoken with the pretence that it never had been written, e.g. plays, playlets, scripted dialogues, well rehearsed so that it sounds 'spontaneous'

(f) written language, meant to be read silently, but read aloud

(g) a) heard, written to be read as if heard, e.g. 'Dear Reader', etc
    b) written to be read as if overheard, e.g. direct speech in novels.

Let us now consider firstly what spoken language is in fact accessible to the teacher and, secondly, which of this will most efficiently promote the listening skill in the pupils. The teacher (or course-writer) concerned with the communicative functions of language will ultimately aim to help pupils to deal with spontaneous speaking such as they will encounter in a 'real' situation. He or she is, however, limited by the practicalities of obtaining samples of (a) and (b) on a scale massive enough to enable the selection and grading of sufficient examples to offer a full and varied course in listening. (a) and (b), however desirable, are not normally available outside the foreign environment.

Many courses still give pupils too much of (f) and (g) to listen to. Such language, designed primarily to be read, is not only unhelpful when spoken, it may in fact be harmful when used by pupils as a model for their own speech, and should therefore in no way provide the basis of aural/oral elements in an L2 course.

Some more recent courses have contented themselves with examples of (d) and (e). These are 'conversations' scripted in advance and are what has been called 'spoken prose'. They are not to be confused with real, spontaneous conversations, since between the two there is a world of difference - phonetic, phonological, grammatical and stylistic. Having accepted, however, that spoken prose may be the best we can do for beginners or near beginners, we can concentrate on its advantages. Clearly, since it is scripted, its vocabulary and structural content can be controlled for pedagogical purposes. However, some of the spoken prose samples in many courses have been too carefully controlled by structural constraints, so that the speakers on tape 'structurespeak',[2] as Julian Dakin calls it, in the manner of drills, rather than engage in spoken prose conversation. Spoken prose samples of L2 can vary from the convincing to the highly unconvincing.

PART 2 - PEDAGOGICAL AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

a) Aims

Modern linguists have been called upon to justify the inclusion of a modern language in the secondary school curriculum and to state the aims of L2 learning in terms of its unique contribution to the personal development of the growing learner. It is therefore necessary to state in both linguistic and non-linguistic terms the aims the L2 teacher has when he promotes the listening skill in an L2. The linguistic aims are obvious - we want to enable the learner to understand to the best of his ability as much of the L2 as we can manage in the time given in the language course. But what about the learners who are not very good at languages and who may well give it up at the end of the compulsory common course? What benefit might they have derived from all their attempts at L2 learning? It is not within the scope of this chapter to answer this question fully. It attempts only to outline what benefits such pupils may derive from developing the listening skill. Most pupils in the 11-to-14 age range are not experienced, attentive listeners. The demands made of the L2 learner in listening are far greater than those made of him when listening to his L1. The sound of the L2 are unusual, distinctions are subtle, intonations unfamiliar - and all this carries a message. In many respects pupils derive an ear training akin to that developed by teachers of music.

b) 'Teaching' Listening

Since listening is a receptive activity, with the activity taking place internally in the pupil's mind, it is not accessible to the teacher for study and evaluation. The teacher has no idea of what is being processed by the learner, of what is being understood or of what has been missed. It is therefore necessary to engage the pupil in a second activity, an exercise of some kind in which he is required to demonstrate to the teacher what he has understood, to 'externalise his understanding'. When a pupil speaks in the L2, we judge his ability to speak by what he says. When a pupil listens, we judge his ability to listen by evaluating something quite different. Much time and ingenuity has gone into the devising of listening comprehension exercises and practising teachers know well how difficult it is to devise good ones.

These problems have dominated their thinking more than that of providing good listening material in the first place. There is a reason for this. In some senses of the word, listening is 'unteachable'. One cannot 'explain' how to listen well in an L2. Neither can one 'demonstrate' how to listen well, nor give 'good examples' of fine listenting. Listening may well be unteachable in the senses described above, but it is not unlearnable. Pupils have managed to learn to listen to the L2 with understanding, even though the process is unteachable, and even though teachers have difficulty in measuring the degree of understanding achieved by the pupil. Presenting the pupil with opportunities for practising the skill seems to be the only pedagogical approach, in the belief that the more opportunities for practice the pupils are offered, the better listeners they will become. There is clearly much truth in this, but the statement is not very helpful. The problem of teaching listening may perhaps be more helpfully stated by asking the question, 'what are the optimal classroom conditions most favourable for promoting the learning of L2 listening?[1]

The problem has been aproached in two main ways which can be called the 'atomistic' and the 'wholistic' approach. The atomistic approach consists of breaking language up into its minimal component parts or 'atoms' and practising mastery of these. This approach arose from the mechanistic-structuralist view of language together with a behaviourist view of language teaching. The smallest atom is the phoneme, therefore one begins to teach listening comprehension by engaging the beginner in sound discrimination exercises at different levels. Below are some examples:

Word level

1. long, lent, long, long	1. a b c d
2. lent, loin, loin, loin	2. a b c d

Clause level

1. J'ai dit 'oui', Paul	1.
2. J'ai dit 'oui', Paul	2.
3. J'ai dit 'oui', Paul	3.
4. J'ai dit 'huit', Paul	4.

Such sound discrimination exercises are made up in batteries and the aim is to train the ear to distinguish between minimal sound differences.

Sound discrimination (grammar)

1. Il vend, il vend, il vend, ils vendent — 1. a b c d is plural.
2. Ich mache, ich machte, ich mache, ich mache — 2. a b c d is past tense.

Intonation

1. Du kommst mit ins Kino? This is a) a statement
b) a command
c) a question.

Intonation + Meaning (advanced)

'Was, Paul!? Einkaufen gegangen! Das hättest du morgen machen können!

Hans is		because Paul	
1.	surprised	1.	wants to shop tomorrow
2.	exasperated	2.	can't shop tomorrow
3.	delighted	3.	has been shopping
4.	relieved	4.	could have done the shopping

The implication is that Paul
1. should not have gone shopping
2. could not go shopping
3. did well to remember the shopping
4. will be able to do the shopping tomorrow

Each exercise is based on one contrast or language element in isolation. Pupils are listening for linguistic aspects and although none of the above sets out to test for meaning, except for the advanced example, it is obvious that the earlier examples will be better answered if pupils understand the meaning of them all.

This approach to promoting listening comprehension holds the view that the surest learning progress is from sound to meaning, from phonology to semantics.

The wholistic approach is concerned primarily with meaning of all kinds, semantic, grammatical and attitudinal, and such practice, from beginners to advanced pupils, aims at getting the pupil to understand as much as possible and at discovering how much, or how deeply, the pupil has understood. The language of such listening material aims to be as natural and realistic as possible. This means that as many of the situational features of the language as are relevant will be given to the pupil. Below is an example.

ON TAPE: Listen to the following conversation between Paul and Jean at a crowded party. Paul speaks first:

P Jean, tu connais la fillette là-bas au coin?

J Uh . . . . mm . . . . uh laquelle?

P Celle-là qui porte la blouse bleu-clair et la jupe bleue.

J Ah oui, celle qui a le ruban blanc aux cheveux?

P Mon Dieu, non. Tu es aveugle? Regarde . . . . là . . . . elle a un collant rouge, et sa blouse n'a pas de manches.

J Ah oui . . . . elle a une cigarette à la main droite.

P Oui . . . . elle s'appelle Jeanne . . . .

After listening to the conversation, the pupils are asked to colour in and draw the mental picture they have obtained of Jeanne. One mark is given for each correct item.

From the examples above it will be immediately apparent that both the wholistic and the atomistic approaches have differing advantages and disadvantages, which will best be appreciated if the above examples are regarded as listening test items rather than informal class-practice exercises. Good tests are supposed to be reliable and valid. Whereas atomistic tests have a high degree of reliability they are usually very weak on validity, i.e. these tests bear little resemblance to 'real' language in real situations. Wholistic tests, attempting as they do to be as close to language in use as possible, have a high degree of validity but rate poorly on reliability. Marking schemes are difficult to arrive at; they are more subjective than objective. In addition, results are bedevilled by the added factor of memory or at least short-term recall. The pupil may have understood all, but forgotten some of it in the test situation. Whereas standardised wholistic tests are very rare, standardised atomistic tests abound in published form.

Many teachers appear to find that a combination of both approaches is the most satisfactory way of promoting the listening skill at all stages in language teaching. I am in agreement with this view, but prefer to put more emphasis on the wholistic approach at all stages of language learning as I consider that, whether atomistic or wholistic, worthwhile meaning should be of the essence.

c) Classroom Constraints

Listening in the classroom, compared with listening in 'real life', is highly artificial because:

(1) Except for 'teacher talk', pupils listen without seeing the speaker. Taped speech is 'disembodied language'. The very important visual cues which aid comprehension are absent.

(2) Spoken prose is the best linguistic compromise that can be achieved. Whilst it can be regarded as a useful stepping stone to the real thing, it

must in no way be seen as a substitute for it. The ultimate pay-off for the pupil is listening in the L2 country.

(3) The activities given to the pupils to do to demonstrate their understanding seldom resemble what the pupil would have to do in the real situation.

Some of the above constraints can be removed by the use of video-taped listening materials, but because of the high cost of the necessary hardware, as far as many schools are concerned, extensive use of video recordings is a development for the future. It must come, however, and BBC and ITV language programmes already provide excellent source material. By the addition of auditory, non-linguistic cues - a glass breaking, a door slamming - audio-tapes can be much more richly situationally contextualised. Many 'real situation' clues are not only seen, but also heard. By responding in L2 to sound clues, such as glass breaking, pupils can externalise their comprehension of the sound. But, by rights, this activity does not belong to this chapter, as it involves activity beyond that of indicating comprehension.

Many teachers report that there is simply not enough time to do all the things they would like to do in the classroom, and curtailing time devoted to the listening skill has often resulted from this. The listening and speaking skills are heavily dependent on teacher-pupil contact time in a way which is not true of the reading and writing skills, much of which can be practised at home. Language learning in schools may well be accelerated if the use of the total time available for L2 learning, both at school and at home, were reconsidered. Time must be made for the use and exploitation of good listening materials. The use of the language laboratory for listening practice should not be underrated. It offers the pupils the only opportunity of listening to understand the L2 at their own pace. This facility is especially valuable in mixed-ability classes. The abler pupils are not held back and the less able run less risk of getting hopelessly lost.

d) Listening - The Relationship between the Skills

Most teachers agree that most pupils are able to understand spoken language of a level higher than that which they can produce. Teachers know this of themselves, too. They realise that recognition is easier than recall. In the earlier years of language learning, however, listening comprehension does not seem to forge ahead of the productive skills so readily, perhaps because it is prevented from doing so. Pupils' listening is generally limited to the level of language in any given lesson from which the other three skills are also being taught. The listening skill can and, it is argued here, should be freed from the lock-step progression with the other skills. Otherwise it can be justly said that the listening skill is being held back.

For example, a pupil who can understand a narrative in the present tense can be 'taught' with comparatively little extra learning to understand it in the past or future tense. The only requisite is to learn a few adverbs or adverb phrases of past or future reference, such as hier, la semaine passée, demain, jeudi prochain, etc. If the verbs are carefully selected at the initial stage the pupils can learn to understand events in the desired tense because the time markers will indicate to the pupil in which time area the events take place. This may facilitate the learning of these tenses in the other skills when the time comes. The pupils will have that comforting feeling of *déjà entendu*.

There seems to be little that is definitely known about the relationship between the skills of listening and speaking. Consider the following as if it were an utterance: *UN de MES AMIS a fait CADEAU d'une VOITURE à sa FEMME*. The pupil only requires to decode the words in large type to arrive at a complete understanding of the utterance and both pupil and teacher are satisfied. The teacher does not normally know how the pupil arrived at his understanding. If, therefore, the 'little words' are not attended to in the decoding, it should come as little surprise to the teacher if the pupils produces utterances like: **UN MON AMIS donné CADEAU du VOITURE à son FEMME*, or **J'ai allé pour une tasse du thé*. (suis and prendre not decoded). The pupil is filling in the 'little words', which to his credit he knows ought to be there, with inventions of his own or direct translations from his L1. If the pupil's ability to produce language is almost a mirror-image reflection of 'what goes in', and if, as many teachers believe, the listening skill can be improved with relative simplicity, it seems logical to suggest that more time could be most valuably spent on developing in the pupil an acute and accurate listening skill. The proposition to consider is that more time spent on listening and a little less on speaking might produce more accurate speaking.

Dictation exercises have been on the language teaching scene for a long time, frequently or rarely engaged in depending on the fashion of the moment. This wavering attitude to dictation seems to reveal uncertainty about the relationship between the spoken and the written word, the relationship of sound to symbol. Teachers agree, however, that the learners' ability to write what they hear and say what they have read is a valuable linguistic accomplishment. If dictation exercises help to promote these accomplishments, then listening and writing of this or related kinds is a valuable exercise. It is well known that if a pupil hears and then can write *elle est allée*, he is doing much more than relating symbol to sound, he is also revealing a knowledge of the different grammatical relationships that one sound can enter into. For this to happen, of course, it is essential that all dictated material should already be familiar to the pupils.

e) A Listening Plan

Below is a programme aimed at developing the listening skill from the early stages to sixth form level, and exploiting it to support the development of the other language skills. The plan is not intended to be a model for all teachers to follow. It was designed for the learning population of a specific school with reference to the examinations taken by pupils in the Scottish education system. In fact, the model is in itself not important. What is important is to have a plan at all. It helps to crystallise in the teacher's mind what listening material is needed, to make the plan work. It should also help the teacher to assess the value of the listening materials already available. Note that the approach in the following plan (much shortened to save space) is more wholistic than atomistic:

A PROGRAMME OF EXERCISES FOR THE EARLY YEARS (SI-SII)

Exercise	Purpose	Notes
1. Sound discrimination exercise.	Developing familiarity with foreign sounds. An 'ear' test.	A pupil must be able to hear sound differences in order to produce them when speaking. Tests at word, phrase and sentence level.
2a. Vocabulary exercises. 'Odd man out'.	Recognising meaning.	Example: bleu, rouge, GRAND, blanc. Pupil can only be sure of correct answer by knowing meaning of at least three.
b. Culture meaning. 'Odd Man Out'.	Background studies.	Example: Calais, MARSEILLE, Dieppe, Boulogne.
c. Grammatical discrimination. 'Odd Man Out'.	Learning the status of words in the L2.	Example: sur, sous, dans, PETIT. This example deals with parts of speech.
d. Meaning. Sentence level.	Recognising synonymous or near-synonymous concepts.	Example: Il fait beau. Le soleil brille. IL NEIGE. Il fait chaud.
3. Meaning. True(T), False(F), Can't tell(C).	Understanding and making a judgement.	Example: Il pleut à Paris en ce moment. (C) Ton prof. de français est laid. (F!!!)
4. Meaning. Discourse level. Short monologues.	Test of meaning + short-term recall.	'Bonjour! Je m'appelle JEAN. J'ai 13 ans. Je suis GRAND pour mon âge. Je vais au lycée de RENNES. Mon père est MECANICIEN. Change the information in capital letters.
5. Meaning. Supra-segmental features.	Developing ability to derive meaning of utterance beyond the meaning of the words spoken.	Example: 'Tiens! C'est toi, Adèle!!' (intonation of surprise.) (A) Anna was waiting for Adèle. (B) Anna was surprised to see Adèle. (C) Anna was hoping to see Adèle. (D) Anna tells Adèle it's hers.

A PROGRAMME OF EXERCISES FOR THE EARLY YEARS (SI-SII)

Exercise	Purpose	Notes
6. Meaning. Gist extraction.	Distinguishing essential from inessential, insignificant from the significant.	Texts longer, containing a 'point' or series of points. Pupils to answer one general question or two at the most.
7. Meaning. appropriate response. Good manners.	Relations between listening and speaking. Multi-skill practice.	Example: Adult: Tu t'appelles Henri? P: Oui/ non, monsieur.
8. Sound to symbol. Discrimination. Meaning not forced.	Judging what is heard. Same or different from what is written.	Example: Hear: Jean va me donner des timbres. See: JEANNE va me donner DEUX timbres. Pupils underline what is different from what they hear. For abler young pupils. First step to dictée.
9. Meaning. Appropriate response.	Logical relationships between utterances. Meaning.	Pupil hears: 'Udo driving, turns to Petra in back seat: Ich kann aber gut fahren, nicht wahr?' Pupil sees/hears:- a) Mach doch keinen Blödsinn! Schau lieber geradeaus! b) Komm schnell! c) Fahren wir nach Cadolzburg? If spoken L more difficult than responses = listening exercise, if vice versa = more of a reading exercise.
10. Meaning. Dialogues. Overhearing.	Learning to understand people not speaking to listener.	Gist questions in English.
11. Simple public announcements, short news items, Sports results, "Pop" gossip. Chat shows with stars.	Listening for necessary information. Introduction to language of the "media".	Specific questions in English.

Additional Exercises for Intermediate pupils

Exercise	Purpose	Notes
12. Simple jokes.	Learning to understand L2. Speaker trying to be funny.	Listening for pleasure. Abler pupils listen as often as necessary to be able to retell joke. This makes pupils listen very attentively indeed.
13. Meaning. Descriptive language.	Understanding a series of elements and building a "mental picture". (See "Draw a girl" exercise.)	Text describing arrangement of a room. Pupil draws in the arrangement he understands - position of furniture, etc.

NOTES

The above techniques are not difficult to devise and most of them can be used at an intermediate stage with appropriately more complex language and under more searching conditions. Not all the above examples are of equal usefulness. Pupils find some more enjoyable and some seem to be more motivating than others. Easy material is that used already taught for speech; speaking speed: slow; utterances short; pauses between utterances (decoding time). Harder as above, speeded up. Hardest material is that spoken at native speaker speed; utterances longer; extra information not necessarily needed to be understood by pupil. Texts to be examples of language you will want your pupils to be able to produce when they speak about themselves.

Advanced Level - V and VI Forms

Exercises 5 to 14 can be used at an advanced level using the appropriate language. Exercise 5 can be taken to sophisticated lengths when one considers the vast variety of attitudinal implications of pitch, stress, loudness, rhythm, pauses, etc. At this level, listening should be combined with the other skills, e.g. Listen + write + speak. Pupils should now be engaged in total language activities reflecting more and more real-life use of language. In addition, advanced pupils should be introduced to the language of the educated native speaker through increased listening to monologues. Monologue is very much the mode of the educated speaker and learning to understand such speakers should be an essential aim of the VI form specialist. Here are two examples:

Listen (lecturette) Write (notes in L1 or L2) Speak (in L2 from notes)

Listen (news items) Speak (retells main points to 3rd person, in L2)

* * *

It is unfortunately true that there exists no set of language teaching procedures, techniques, methods or materials which are regarded as leading inevitably to success. This does not mean that all approaches are equally effective. They are not. With regard to the listening skill there is much yet to be learned. Until psychologists and other experts can devise a way of 'getting inside the head' of a pupil when he is listening to the L2 in order to discover just what mental and neurological processes are at work, progress in developing the listening skill is likely to remain largely a matter of trial and error.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] Gregory, M: 'Aspects of varieties differentiation'. Journal of Linguistics, vol.3 nc.2, October 1967.

Also of relevance to this chapter are the following:

Geddes, M and R White: 'The use of semi-scripted simulated authentic speech and listening comprehension'. Audio-Visual Language Journal, vol.16 no.3, winter 1978.

Beile, W: 'Towards a classification of listening comprehension exercises'. Audio-Visual Language Journal, vol.16 no.3, winter 1978.

[2] Dakin, J: The language laboratory and language learning. Longman, 1973.

6. Speaking

Pat Brockman

It is not difficult to appreciate the reasons why, with an increasingly international language, an empire at her feet, and a stretch of water separating her from the nearest foreign tongue, Britain should hardly have excelled amongst Europe's linguists. Although belated membership of the EC may have helped to heighten our awareness of this deficiency, its impact upon the learning of European languages in our schools is less than might have been anticipated. Equally small, or so it would appear, are the beneficial effects of the change in language teaching methodology which came with the introduction of audio-visual technology. The principal intention was that Britain's schoolchildren should be taught to speak languages as well as write them. The new-found oral fluency would do much for confidence and motivation, and would ultimately help rehabilitate our linguistic reputation. Yet in spite of such laudable aims, the pupils in our schools are still subjected to an 'excessive use of English', and show 'an inability to produce other than inadequate or largely unusable statements in the modern language'.[1]

One is tempted to react to such comments by apportioning blame. Examinations, one might say, have played their part by testing what is most easily tested, and only latterly bestowing form, appropriate marks, and respectability on the oral examination. Courses, audio-visual, audio-lingual or purely textual, have done service and disservice by their thoroughness, in that their materials are frequently too dense and infertile for oral exploitation yet, because so full, seeming to need no further additions - indeed, leaving little time for additions. Most texts are there in order to embody as complete a picture as possible of the chapter's grammatical points. There then follow varying quantities of questions, drills, paradigms, oral routines and listed vocabulary. Every aspect of the point in hand has been thoroughly illustrated and covered, yet the resulting text is often a poor vehicle for oral work. The situation it depicts is necessarily contrived and often lacks authenticity. More inhibiting still, however, is the sheer quantity of new language it introduces, little of which is of obvious oral use outside the phrase in which it occurs in the text.

One could equally well level criticism at teacher training and resulting competence, and at pupil motivation. Observations such as these may indeed bring us nearer to an appreciation of why the oral skill, man's first and favoured means of communication, should be said to be so ignored by those most closely connected with its propagation in the modern language class.

The nature and role of speech in the foreign language is undoubtedly defined and regulated by elements of language teaching's surface structure. Of greater significance, however, is the interpretation placed by the teacher on what is meant by 'speaking'. Although the familiarity of the verb and the activity is confusing in itself, it is possible to identify two major points of emphasis when the word is used in reference to what happens within the modern language classroom: emphasis on the accuracy of syntax, lexis, accent and intonation, and emphasis on the function of what is said, or the purpose which the utterance serves for the speaker.

Because of the multiplicity of functions which natural speech serves, the many contexts in which it occurs, and the particular constraints of the classroom, we have traditionally taken as the starting point of our preparation the items of lexis and syntax we wanted our pupils to use, and have worked backwards in order to identify a starting point with which our pupils would be capable of coping. Thence to the teaching, administered with varying degrees of structure, flexibility and English, until the disembodied target phrase was uttered with grammatical accuracy - at which point, give or take a reprise, it was deemed conquered, acquired. In many ways one would be glad if this were more generally the case. Then at least, substantial numbers of pupils would be involved in making adequate utterances in a foreign language.

Whether or not such utterances are usable, however, depends on more factors than just their grammatical accuracy. For example:

Faites des phrases :

Je me suis amusé(e)	à	regarder les gens qui passaient
Ils se sont amusés		faire des courses
Nous nous sommes amusé(e)s		faire du ski nautique
J'ai passé l'après-midi		prendre un bain de soleil
la matinée		parler des incidents du voyage
		danser

The resulting sentences will do no more than enable the teacher to check that the grammatical point in question has been accurately copied. There is no sense in which 'J'ai passé l'après-midi à faire du ski nautique' is being used by the pupil to inform, to communicate meaning, or to fulfil a genuinely experienced supplementary to the presumed need of getting the phrase right. It is only when attention is paid to the functional value of utterances, and therefore to the contexts in which they might realistically occur, that language can be said to be 'used'.

Let us look for a moment at the functions, or 'models', of language which structure the development of the mother tongue (L1).

In five papers entitled Explorations in the Functions of Language[2] M A K Halliday investigates the purposes which the mother tongue serves, and examines the extent to which language form has been determined by its functions. Halliday first elaborates 'a functional interpretation of the child's early language development' and relates this to the more complex and abstract functions of adult language. Though his examples are of English, his analysis applies equally to other languages in use. What follows is an illustrated summary:

> 'When a child begins to learn his mother tongue, he is in effect learning new modes and conditions of being, and his progress consists in mastering one by one a small set of basic functions (or models) of language. He is learning how to mean, and the meaning potential he is building up is a measure of what he can do with language.'

The simplest function, which Halliday calls the *instrumental* model, is when the child becomes aware of language as a means of getting things done: the 'I want' function, performed equally effectively by a yell, or by an adult's 'full-dress imperative clause'.

Closely linked with this is language as a means whereby individuals exercise control over one another: the *regulatory* 'do as I tell you' model, based initially on children's experience of being controlled by their parents, and developed in their own attempts to control their peers and siblings. Their potential develops from simple demands, to the depersonalisation of a set of instructions into rules, as when they explain the rules of a game. Whereas with the previous model 'a drink', or 'a banana' would have been the principal goal, regardless of who was there to respond to the request, here the emphasis is on the other person: 'Daddy, come here. Draw a car. No, don't rub it out.' 'The one who finishes their cake first is the winner.' As with all models, the greater the experience of its children's potentialities, the greater their appreciation of its value.

The children's increasing awareness of who they are and how they are related to others is reflected in their *interactional* and *personal* models of language, in which they consolidate and contest group status as learners and users of language ('me and you') and becomes conscious of language as a form of their own individuality ('here I come').

The other side of the coin is the children's growing understanding of their environment and the way in which it works, and their *heuristic* model of language derives from their knowledge of how language has enabled them to explore this environment. Asking questions, making generalisations about reality and seeking to develop this model by imitation and application of the form and content of what they hear, demonstrates a child's knowledge of what language is for: 'Why is that train stopping?' 'Why do cats lick themselves?' 'If you take the sledge right to the top of the hill, it will go faster.' Bernstein[3] has shown the importance of this aspect of linguistic development in the context of parent-child communication, and the significance of the latter, in turn, to the child's success in early education.

Many children already control a 'metalanguage' about the heuristic function of language, in that they know what a question is, what an answer is, and what 'knowing', 'understanding', 'explaining', and 'problem' are. In whatever way an explanation is announced: 'I'll tell you how it works.' 'Mummy will explain.' 'Well, ...', children are aware that what follows is intended to bring them closer to an understanding of reality. Whether or not it does so will affect the regularity and confidence with which children choose to operate the heuristic model of language, and will colour their reactions to contexts such as the classroom, where this model predominates.

'Language about language' has another base in the children's ability to create the rough language for a world of their own making, whereby they derive the *imaginative* model of language ('let's pretend'), which provides further elements of 'metalanguage' with words like story, idea, pretend, make-up. Content need have no part in this, as many of us will have realised when eavesdropping on a child's invention of rythmic sequences, rhymes, riddles - 'a house built of playing cards where face values are irrelevant'.

Finally, as a vehicle for communicating meaning, for expressing proportions, and conveying messages about persons, objects, processes, abstractions, qualities, states and relations of the real world outside, we come to the *representational*, informative, or ideational ('I've got something to tell you') model. Halliday sees this as one of the last to come into prominence, one which does not become dominant until a much later stage in the development towards maturity, but one which in many adults largely combines with or replaces the other six models.

The complexity of an adult's range of language functions stems not from additional models, but from the way in which one utterance fulfils several functions at once. Before undertaking an analysis of adult language, Halliday makes two points. First, our conception of language (as adults and teachers), if it is to be adequate for meeting the needs of the child, will need to incorporate and take into account all the child's own models. Secondly, the above are models of language *use*, not of language *acquisition*. No mention is made of chanting, repeating and rehearsing by which a child practises language. Although such techniques are a reality (in the mother tongue), they exist not simply because the children enjoy being learners, but because for them all language is doing something; it has meaning, and possesses a range of functions inseparable from the children themselves.

Halliday's functional interpretation of a child's learning development in the mother tongue has significant implications for the teaching and learning of speech in a foreign language (L2).

(a) It underlines once more the gaps, so clearly illustrated in *Language, the Learner and the School*,* which may exist in a secondary school child's experience and use of language in the adult linguistic context of classroom learning. A child whose heuristic and representational models of language are underdeveloped will find it difficult to attach value to 'explanations' of how something works. Even when fully explained and illustrated, a statement such as 'the adjective usually follows the verb' remains a comment on the language, a description of how one element operates. An emphasis on rule and illustration in the introduction of a language would seem to be suggesting to the learner that French is just one more aspect of the environment, to be analysed and studied with almost scientific objectivity. For a good many children, a mode of study such as this will pose problems proportional to the functional competence of their mother tongue, and these in turn will be exacerbated by the consequent major role played by grammatical terminology, of which many children in the early years of secondary school have no real conceptual grasp.

(b) It points to an inevitable restriction, within the majority of classroom learning contexts, in the number and nature of the functions which a child will call upon the mother tongue to perform. It will be a relatively uncommon experience in the secondary classroom for children to use instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal or even imaginative models of their own language. This is especially true where classroom conversation is exclusively pupil-teacher, teacher-pupil. On the other hand, where children are encouraged to communicate with each other to achieve an identified goal, as perhaps with an experiment in science, language functions increase. The L2 classroom thus needs to give greater scope for such use of language, so that the pupils move towards a wider competence in a wider range of functions.

(c) It alerts us to an additional reason behind the changing attitude to French, Spanish or German as pupils move from first year to third or to fifth. For, bound up with what, for some, will have been an increasingly unsuccessful and therefore unpleasurable experience of learning a foreign language, is the growing awareness of the functional limitations of the utterances they are mastering, both inside and outside the classroom. Pupils may begin to feel that the utterances exist simply as the topic of adult academic classroom discussion, and as objectives for those who can come to enjoy learning for the love of it (though, in one sense, the more of these the merrier!). The classroom teaching of a language must indeed underline the structures and semantic groups it embodies, and subdivide it into proximate targets of learning, but problems arise when this is all it does. Pupils may read the language, aloud or to themselves, in a variety of texts, in which it serves any number of fuctions; similarly they may hear it being used, but their teacher will rarely request or enable their use of L2 to correspond (on a functional level) with their use of L1.

Given the functional range of the pupils' mother tongue, not to mention the full complexity of the adult language, it is depressing that they are required to perform so few of these functions in the foreign language. It is unlikely in the majority of language lessons that any pupil will have used L2 in a regulatory, personal, interactional or imaginative function, or even in a truly heuristic or representational way. This slim chance is almost completely removed if the pupil is never asked to use L2 in conversation with classmates or with visitors, be they genuine foreigners, other teachers, or visiting observers.

It is not enough to make available to the pupil the means of constructing an utterance, nor simply to request the production of such utterances in order to verify that the syntax and lexis have been acquired. There must also be a setting where the pupil can call upon L2 to perform a function extrinsic to this process, and this may involve interlocutors other than the teacher. We all have our stories of First Year pupils who bubble away from their first French lessons acting out everything they have been taught, as if, 'C'est un cahier?' 'Non, c'est une chaise' really were a snippet of true conversation from the French child in the street. Its use in this context resembles the 'let's pretend' model of a child's language, and offers proof, if proof were needed, that although they pretend, the learners have made assumptions about the ultimate nature of the language they have started to learn - they are entitled to expect it to be functional, like their mother tongue, and to expect that their teachers will fulfil their expectations. For example:-

i) 'Est-ce que je peux emprunter ton stylo?' 'Voulez-vous mettre la télévision un peu plus fort?' may have been taught as examples of 'pouvoir' and 'vouloir' + infinitive, but will not acquire an instrumental function for the pupils until they have used them in a verbal interchange to obtain a pen or to have the TV turned up.

ii) 'Prenez la deuxième rue à gauche.' 'Reste là; ne bouge pas!' are examples of the imperative, but the pupils will not develop a regulatory function in French until they have used phrases such as these to control the actions of others.

iii) 'J'aime beaucoup les pommes.' 'Non, je ne viens pas - je n'aime pas les westerns, et puis en tout cas ce n'est pas un très bon film!' Both phrases have a personal function. The first may be no more than an expression of taste in response to a question, or can possess the instrumental function of requesting an apple. In the second phrase, the context of which is fairly clear, there is an expression of personal intent, and perhaps an implicit attempt to regulate the behaviour of others. None of this is of any functional consequence to the pupils if the phrases are devoid of context and never used in a verbal exchange.

iv) 'Qu'est-ce qu'il faut faire pour téléphoner?' 'Dans quelle région est-ce qu'on cultive les cerises?' It is not difficult to conceive of real-life situations where the author of each utterance is intent on obtaining information. In the modern-language class, if the pupils already know the information they have been asked to request, they are doing no more than practising two forms of question; but they are not using language in its heuristic function.

v) Similarly, 'On doit rester à l'école jusqu'à l'âge de seize ans.' 'Je suis sorti avec mes amis, et j'ai oublié de faire mes devoirs' are phrases which, in conversation between English pupil and French native, then between pupil and teacher, would have representational functions. Not so if the only reason for ever requiring their production is to enable the teacher to check that the phrases are structurally intact.

(d) If the ultimate aim in teaching the spoken language is to bring the pupils according to their ability through L2 in its pedagogic context to a use of L2 which corresponds as frequently and as closely as possible to their use of L1, then no matter how restricted the function or 'text' of what they are being taught to say, it follows that, where possible, a context for its use additional and extrinsic to that of learning/teaching should be identified and realised.

In some areas of language, and for some pupils, the context devised will be a goal in itself, without any planned sequel outside the classroom, and may not differ scenically from the context used to teach the target item of language. A simple game, for instance, may take certain items of language, and use them as a means by which a pupil communicates with his or her classmates in order to compete against them. The pupil's change of rôle from learner to competitor in the same group is straightforward , but the function of the utterances used alters considerably: they are no longer in use to be checked, but in order to respond to the requirements of the pupil. The target item of language may never be used in a real-life transactional exchanges but the game itself will have provided the functional context (see later).

In other cases, where more extensive role-play is required as the only feasible sequel to an item's acquisition, greater demands are made of all concerned. The pupil may be asked to play the role of one of the characters in a given scene or text, to assume the character's intentions, and to develop a conversation within clearly-defined linguistic parameters. In this case, an appropriate range of language alternatives should be taught if the pupil is to respond to the language of others and not to that of a 'play-script'.

The character itself should be credible and fully familiar, as must the speaker's motives in the scene, for, throughout, the pupil is being asked to 'decentre', and assume language and language functions which are not immediately his or her own; as well as detailed planning, the process requires and rewards a generous allocation of time. Of course, where the setting for a more functional use of language takes the form of a conversation with a French native, or a visit to France, problems of 'decentring' scarcely occur; nevertheless, planning and time are still of vital importance.

Inherent in what has been said so far are two assumptions. First, the quality and functional wealth of the language acquisition process outweighs any straightforward concern for quantity: linguistic safety cannot be found in ensuring that chapter follows chapter and text follows text in ever more rapid succession. Secondly, and more important, the speaking of a foreign language is of necessity a focal point of its presentation and exploitation.

Language in learning

It is reasonable to assume that along with a multitude of different motives and capabilities a child entering secondary education retains from infancy 'a desire to make sense of his surroundings, and a developing capacity for inference'.[2] It is often argued that in the interests of progressing as rapidly and effectively as possible to the stage where L2, once understood, and pronounced by the pupil, is 'ready for use', one should couch in English all explanation of syntax and definition of meaning. No one is thereby left in the dark, and the tedium of the learning process is a short-lived and trivial intermediate burden rapidly forgotten in the excitement of applying the language. Laudable as it is for L2 to be allowed to function outside the process of its own acquisition, to do so by undervaluing the means by which it is acquired is in my view ill-advised. No surrounding is created of which the children need to make sense, and whatever capacity they may have for inference is by-passed. It has been my experience that very few children are incapable of profiting from a more active involvement in the presentation and acquisition of new items of language. The excessive use of English militates against this involvement and leads the pupil to assume that only English contains real significance: 'When the teacher wants us to understand something, he/she speaks to us in English!' It is desirable and feasible that L2 in its oral form should be the dominant classroom currency, used to present, define and exploit new language.

The meaning and structure of new items of language will require definition, both visual and linguistic. The range of media for visual definition is wide. The 'real thing' is often the best alternative. Flash cards or illustrations cut from magazines are sometimes more versatile, though not always as large as one would wish. Flannel-graphs and large sketches on sugar paper are clear enough, but often cumbersome to prepare and store, while film loops and slides are worth setting up for their realism, provided their content does not dictate the teacher's requirements.

While language and its contexts remain basic, the above media may be adequate, but its ease of preparation, storage, and use, its size of image and consequent value in conveying by diagram or sketch the more complex context make the overhead transparency (OHP) a most valuable teaching resource.[3] Even so, unlike the text book or the Banda sheet, all the resources mentioned have an obvious potential for central presentation. The teacher is the primary source of language - it is only fitting that he or she should control the attention of the class and focus it on the chosen part of the visual stimulus.

The lesson's visual element, its form and content will be dependent upon the teacher's analysis of what is already known and of what is to be taught. If this in turn is to be contextualised and defined in L2, it follows that all contingent language should be demonstrably within the grasp of the learner. For example, it may be appropriate during the second year of a French course to introduce verbs such as 'il va', 'elle arrive', 'il quitte', and 'elle rentre'. If, as one would hope, the vivid present is disregarded as a tense for narrating incidents from the past, the above verbs might be introduced in reference to a regular routine, thus justifying the use of the present tense. If the context is to be the daily journey to work, or the routine weekend, expressions such as 'tous les jours', 'tous les matins', and 'tous les soirs', become necessary. If reasons for the journey are to be given, then 'il est garagiste, il travaille dans un garage, il répare les autos, il commence, il finit à . . . .' would be the kind of thing to add. Grammatically, 'il va/il arrive au garage/à la gare' pose problems dependent on an awareness of 'UN garage, UNE gare'. Means of transport may be included, such as 'à pied, en voiture, par le train, en vélo', as also may 'y' if eventually pupils are going to cope with questions like 'Comment est-ce qu'il va au garage?' At the hub of a context such as this, if there is to be some way of specifying a particular stage of the routine, is an ability to handle the time in French, which in turn is dependent on number. We are already a long way from our starting point, so where might the series of lessons begin?

a) OHP showing people digging, cooking, sewing, hammering, contrasting with people sleeping, fishing, eating, reading the paper, inviting quite simply the reply 'il (elle) travaille/il (elle) ne travaille pas'.

b) times revised

c) OHP illustrating five or six jobs and places of work, to yield more intensive practice than just one example would: 'Voilà Mme Ducos; elle est infirmière; elle travaille à l'hôpital. Voilà son mari, M. Ducos - il est barman, et il travaille dans un café'. Worthwhile also to fill in background details on these characters for future rôle-play.

d) 'il (elle) commence/il (elle) finit à . . . .' with times added to second OHP. Underline 'il (elle) travaille/il (elle) ne travaille pas' according to time, which will then prepare for the introduction of 'il (elle) quitte, il (elle) va, il (elle) rentre, il (elle) arrive' once further times have been added.

The unit could lead on to pupils playing the part of the above characters and posing and answering questions about each other's routine, before pupils use the same language to talk about themselves. This stage will only be reached if all pupils have been involved in understanding and using the target language, which of itself means that quantities of new language in each lesson should be small - the above unit, when complete, would provide oral and written work for ten to fifteen lessons with a mixed-ability second year class.

The shape of the unit reveals what is essentially a structured approach, but one which through thematic consideration will yield at the end a functional use of language, extrinsic to its own presentation and acquisition, a setting in which pupils are using language in order to achieve objectives other than the simple mastery of the target phrase. This, for most existing courses, is rare.

Differing levels of ability

My own experience has been in schools whose timetables recognised the desirability of one language lesson per day, and where for the most part language lessons were blocked in half-year groups. Although, in practice, teaching groups were generally mixed-ability, blocking made it possible to create withdrawal groups of less able pupils at any point during the first three years. The aims, objectives and therefore spoken content of a course for this or any such group differ considerably from the core syllabus, reflecting a shift in balance between the productive and receptive skills. For the remaining pupils course content and approach must cater for the needs and propensities of what will in most schools still be a wide range of ability, whether this is met through mixed ability teaching or through setting. I have outlined an approach to spoken French which takes into account difficulties encountered by the average and below average pupil whilst allowing for flexibility in the demands made of the more able. From a secure base in the structure of the spoken language, a structure revealed within and between the various units of the course, opportunity can be made for pupils to display their resourcefulness, especially when language function progresses from pedagogic to personal. The exact place in a lower or upper school course of the units described depends less on pupils' chronological age than on the language they are capable of mastering.

Equally, the spoken content of units of this structure is capable of meeting the needs of pupils following a three-year course, as well as the more academic requirements of those likely to continue with French after the age of sixteen.

Conclusion

Bilingualism, where the speaker experiences no personal restriction, be it socio-cultural or linguistic, in being required to use one language rather than another, is not a realistic goal for the language classroom. At the other, more familiar extreme, it is untenable that after learning a modern language for three, five or sometimes seven years pupils should disregard it as a vehicle for communication in or out of school. As long as L2 remains exclusively a subject of study but not of real verbal interaction, neither confidence, competence, nor experience will allow pupils to stand back occasionally from the form of what they say in the language. To allow language in the classroom to do more than testify publically to its own grammatical and lexical well-being will itself help disentangle and detach the pupils from the language they are trying to learn and will remind them that their command of the language is directly related to the range of functions they have required it to perform.

APPENDIX A

It is not intended that this appendix should be seen simply as 'helpful hints', but rather as an illustration of the points I have been seeking to establish. The examples (in note form) are taken from recent work with second, third and fourth year French groups. In his contribution to *A handbook for language teachers*, Roy Dunning develops at length the exploitation of a *text* as the basis for improvised role-play.[6] I propose, therefore, to concentrate on other starting-points, simply stating in passing that development from texts is a crucial part of language teaching.

In the following sections, pupils will be using the language they have learned in order to *fulfil a function*. They will do so by speaking to one another, a channel of communication sadly ignored in most classes. Even where speaking is the principle learning device, utterances are invariably addressed to the teacher, and most responses are from the teacher. Much of what the items attempt would be within the scope of an able first year group, although one would hope that a substantial part of the vocabulary would have been met in other contexts. In my own teaching, mixed ability second year groups have worked very effectively with the material. '*Le jeu des préférences*' allows for a variety of response which will extend the more able and provide the less able with an easy way of taking part. '*Sondage*' and '*Conversation*' are equally flexible, the latter giving profitable aural comprehension material automatically within the range of all pupils in the group and the complexity of questions asked in '*Conversation*' can vary according to the ability of those involved.

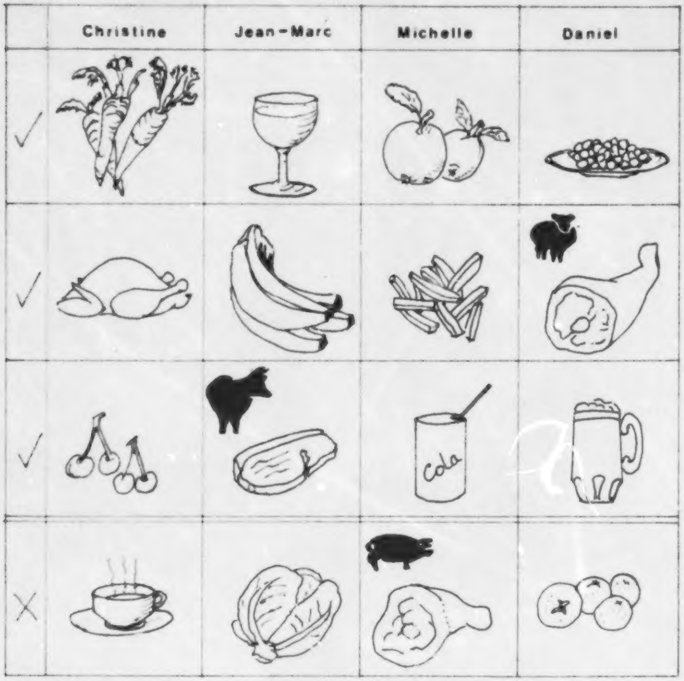
In Appendix B most average third year classes ought to have encountered enough of the question forms and syntax involved to make profitable use of stages 1-9. An upper-school examination course which seeks to teach and test oral competence in a situation would deal easily with the earlier stages, but would need to prepare thoroughly for stage 10; I have used the material with both kinds of class. The wider range of syntax required by this unit makes strenuous demands of less able pupils, especially in those aspects of work in stage 10 (b & c) which call for retention and manipulation of all items taught. It is better here that less able pupils should be asked to work in pairs or groups, and that the emphasis should be placed on the effectiveness of what is said in obtaining information rather than on its word-for-word accuracy. As with the previous unit, the functional use of language produces valuable material for aural comprehension.

1. '*J'aime les pommes*.'

   1.1 Problems - defining '*aime*', '*les pommes*'; providing a context where these and other relevant items can be acquired via oral question/answer; enabling a functional use of the language taught.

   1.2 Other items - other items of food and drink, in this case *les carottes*, *le chou*, *les frites*, *les petits pois*, *les bananes*, *les cerises*, *les oranges*, *le poulet*, *le porc*, *le bifteck*, *l'agneau*, *le vin*, *le café*, *la bière*, *le coca-cola*; *n'aime pas*, *adore*, *déteste*, *préfère*; later questions would require understanding of *un légume*, *un fruit*, *une viande*, *une boisson*, as well as *quel/quelle* and the relevance of its written form to gender. Also appropriate use of *le/un* according to context (*un bifteck*/*le bifteck*).

2. Visual item - overhead transparency A(i), as below.



3.1 Introduce, teach and test new items on A(i), by using helpful, less helpful and finally open questions:-

> C'est du vin, ou c'est de la bière? C'est de la bière.
> C'est du vin, ou c'est du café? C'est du vin.
> Et ça, qu'est-ce que c'est? C'est du café.

3.2 Revise items that are assumed to be known, giving help if necessary (and it will be for some pupils).

3.3 Simple definitions of une boisson, une viande, un fruit, un légume, by example, then teach and test.

> Le vin, c'est une viande ou une boisson? C'est une boisson.
> Les frites, c'est un légume ou un fruit? C'est un légume.
> Et les oranges, qu'est-ce que c'est? C'est un fruit.

(There may be need to link du with le more deliberately.)

3.4 Pupils posing questions of definition -

Le coca, qu'est-ce que c'est? C'est une boisson etc. . .

3.5 On to -

C'est quelle boisson? C'est du café/C'est le café etc. . .

4.1 Introduction of Christine, Jean-Marc, Michelle, Daniel, etc.

(All in the same class in a French school; add other details.)

Clarify and test - Daniel, c'est un garçon. Christine, c'est une fille, etc. Photographs would help, or sketches.

4.2 Introduction of il/elle aime, in this form to avoid je-tu/vous confusion in presentation. Define aime linguistically as a simile for the more obvious il/elle adore, later by contrast with il/elle déteste, and by such situations as 'tous les soirs quand Jean-Marc rentre à la maison, il mange un énorme bifteck! Il aime le bifteck, c'est délicieux!' (accompanied by lip-licking). It is important that such definitions are couched in language that pupils are familiar with. It may help to introduce the lesson by stating that you are going to be talking about people's likes and dislikes.

4.3 Teach, via alternatives as before,

Michelle - elle aime les oranges, ou elle aime les pommes?
Elle aime les pommes.

and eventually:-

Quelle viande est-ce que Christine aime? Elle aime le poulet.
Quel fruit . . . .
Quelle boisson . . . .
Quel légume . . . .

Similarly, on to il/elle n'aime pas, or il/elle déteste, il/elle préfère.

4.4 Written work will mirror oral work, beginning with the presentation, spelling (in French), memorising and verification of written form once the item has been acquired orally.

N.B. C'est de la bière (see 3.1).

Function for pupil in the context in which it occurs above -

> 'I remember which of the two words you used refers to the item you're pointing to (semantic value): from the help you gave in your question, I think it is said like this (phonological value). I'd like you to confirm that I'm right/I'd like my classmates to hear and admire. You already know the answer to your question; my reply only serves to inform you that I've completed the first step towards acquiring the item you're teaching.'

(Later on, with a more open question, the answer's factual content begins to rival its form in importance for teacher and pupil.)

5.1 Use English, but only if necessary, to explain that pupils are going to be learning what Christine, Jean-Marc, Michelle and Daniel would say about their own likes and dislikes. Teacher's questions will contain tu/vous: pupils will eventually reply to questions as if they were the characters on OHP, using j'aime. (This is easier if the characters are real, or at least convincing. It is useful if the foreign language assistant can take the part of each character during presentation.)

5.2 Pupils able to role-play:

> Christine, quel fruit est-ce que tu aimes? J'aime les cerises.
>
> Jean-Marc, est-ce que tu aimes le vin? Oui, monsieur, je l'aime bien/beaucoup (a point worth teaching, if appropriate for level of class).

5.3 Pupils answering similar questions, but speaking this time for themselves, which now and for later will call for an expansion of vocabulary on A(i).

> Anatole, quel fruit est-ce que tu aimes/préfères/n'aimes pas?
> J'aime les fraises.

N.B. Function of reply - to request teacher's confirmation that lexis and structure have been learned but, equally important, to inform the teacher of something he or she did not already know.

6. Using A(i), and the device of writing a reply in order to ask pupils to produce the question it answered, a range of question forms can be taught, as required.

> Est-ce que tu aimes . . . . ?
> Quel fruit est-ce que tu aimes?
> Qu'est-ce que tu aimes comme viande?
> Qu'est-ce que tu n'aimes pas comme fruit?
> Quelle boisson est-ce que tu préfères? etc . . . .

(The form est-ce que may have been rejected earlier in favour of more colloquial forms, e.g. the interrogative form 'Tu aimes les pommes/quel fruit?')

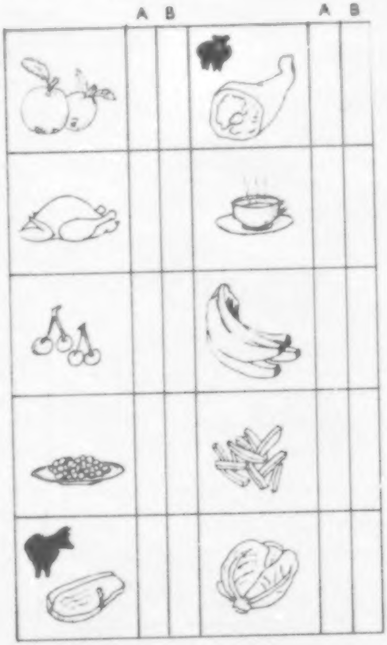
N.B. The use of J'aime les pommes has evolved from purely pedagogic to something approaching functional. Often, it is only when the teacher ceases to be the sole interlocutor or the ever-present linguistic observer that the pupil's view of the function of an item of French will alter.

7. Jeu des préférences

Pupils competing singly or in pairs against each other in their league: class divided into four leagues. The winners of each league play off against each other for semi-finals and final.

Aim: to guess, by asking questions in French, which fruit/vegetable/ meat/drink your opponent has ticked as likes. The winner of each tie is the player/pair who guesses the opponent's choices in the fewer attempts.

Sheet A(ii): 20 or more pictures, with two boxes next to each, for ticks or crosses.



Procedure for each player

a) Tick five items in column A (pencil will enable sheet to be re-used).

b) Decide who will ask questions first.

c) Note your opponent's answers in column B.

> Est-ce que tu aimes les oranges?
>
> Oui, je les aime bien. ( )
> Non, je ne les aime pas. ( )

d) Note the number of attempts you need to guess all of your opponent's choices.

e) He or she will then try to guess your choices in fewer attempts. (Keep a check on which questions he or she asks you.)

The winner of each league will have the greatest number of outright wins; failing that, a better 'guess difference'. The semi-finals and final make a compelling spectator sport!

8. Sondage

Team of four or five researchers, each operating with a group of pupils (from the same or another class).

Aim: to discover and note down individual preferences/tastes in meat, vegetables, fruit and drink, and to produce a block graph to illustrate findings (or write up).

As with the previous activity, it is essential that the language in use is secure enough not to require continual teacher correction.

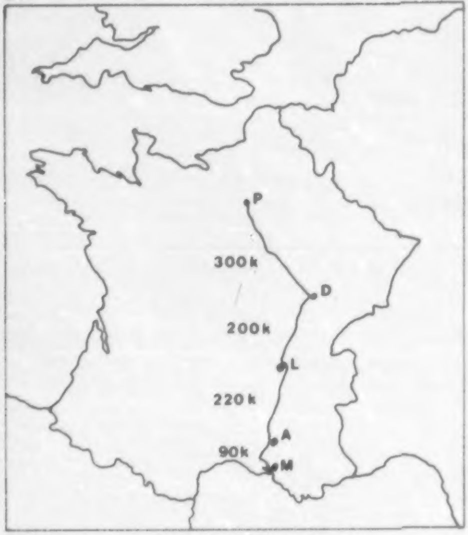
9. Conversation

A conversation with a French native on the topic of likes and dislikes; his or her own or 'French tastes in general'. This could be part of a more general and extensive conversation. The recording of the conversation, in which the questions would be answered and also posed by the French native, would provide a source for further work at different levels, in class or in groups, as well as being a subject for comprehension or display work.

(N.B. In sections 7, 8 and 9, with the language's surface structure mastered, the emphasis for the pupils is very much on the extra-pedagogic function which they are requiring the language to perform. The whole topic can be viewed as a unit, flexible to the requirements of the class and individuals within it. The length of time spent on it will vary - in my own teaching it has made fruitful use of between ten and fifteen lessons.)

APPENDIX B

Bi


P
300k
D
200k
L
220k
A
90k
M

Bii

VOIE	PARIS (Lyon)	DIJON	LYON	AVIGNON	MARSEILLE (St Charles)	
3	07·30	✓	✓	✓	16·30	🍴
7	11·00	–	–	–	18·00	🍷 🍴
5	21·15	–	–	✓	06·30	🛏 🍴

Biii

PARIS – MARSEILLE	
PARIS–MARSEILLE–PARIS	
🛏	
🛏	
🍴	

'A la gare' (à l'aéroport/à l'agence des voyages)

As with the previous example, it would be possible to see the problem simply in terms of equipping pupils to deal with a situation in France, and move straight to the provision of a survival phrasebook. For reasons already stated, this would be undesirable.

1. Visual items - overhead transparencies B(i), (ii), (iii).

2. Using B(i), name towns, introduce and teach distances.

   Dijon, c'est à quelle distance de Paris? C'est à trois cent kilomètres.

3. Revise time, and the numbers, and prices, in preparation for B(ii) and B(iii).

4. Using B(i), present and teach - le premier train, le deuxième train, (later, le prochain train, le dernier train will be of more use) le train de nuit, la voie numéro trois/sept, etc. Il part (à xh) de Paris, il arrive à Marseille (à xh). Il ne s'arrête pas.

   Teach in quantities which reflect the ability and past experience of the group, so that pupils can answer such questions as:

   C'est quel train?
   A quelle heure est-ce que le train de nuit part?
   A quelle heure est-ce qu'il arrive à Marseille?
   De quelle voie est-ce qu'il part?
   Combien de fois est-ce qu'il s'arrête?
   Où est-ce qu'il s'arrête?

5. Present and teach

   Il y a un buffet/un wagon-restaurant/des couchettes.

   and/or

   On peut boire/manger/dormir dans le train.

   so that pupils can answer

   (Est-ce qu')il y a un buffet dans le train?

   and/or

   (Est-ce qu')on peut manger dans le train?

6. Present and teach using B(iii),

   un billet simple, un aller-retour, une place, un repas,

   and the price of each, so that pupils can answer:

   C'est combien pour un billet simple, Paris-Marseille?
   pour réserver une place?
   une couchette?
   pour un repas dans le train?

   (Written work, as before, will follow mastery of oral form of language.

7. After revision of timetable, if this was taught some lessons ago, explain to pupils that they are going to learn how to ask questions and obtain information.

   Use the device of writing a reply on the board, and helping class to generate questions.

   Il part à neuf heures et quart du soir.

   A quelle heure est-ce que le train de nuit part?/Le train part à quelle heure?

   (Useful here to have the help of the assistant as interlocutor.) Otherwise, since pupils will already have seen the written form of the language, the written reply acts as a static point of reference for the rather complex process of moving back from answer to question.)

8. Revision of how to ask for something, and for its cost -

   Je voudrais . . . .
   C'est combien . . . . ?
   Combien coûte . . . . ?

9. Practising the 'situation' in class, by writing instructions in English on the board.

   You are in Paris, and want to travel to Marseille overnight: find out -

   a) the time of the night train
   b) the time of arrival
   c) whether it stops
   d) whether there are couchettes/restaurant car
   e) which platform it leaves from
   f) cost of a single ticket
   g) cost of couchette
   h) ask for single ticket and couchette on train.

The class will collate these questions together at first, before individuals do it all themselves. When this stage is reached, the teacher gives replies to questions, not the same information as on B(ii) & (iii), and pupils note down information given.

N.B. Use of language, apart perhaps for the last section, has been purely pedagogic. Since role-play is required, if this language is to have a functional application, the more vivid the situation and role, the better. Who is the pupil? Why is he/she in France/at a station/wanting to go to Marseille? Slides and information about French stations are valuable. Depending on the ability and experience of the class, contextualisation can be given in French.

> 'Vous êtes en France avec un groupe scolaire. Vous logez tous dans un hôtel à Rouen. Aujourd'hui, vous êtes allés à Paris passer la journée à visiter la capitale. Maintenant, vous êtes arrivés à la gare St Lazare avec un copain. Il est sept heures. Votre train est déjà parti, votre professeur aussi. Expliquez la situation à un employé, et demandez des renseignements.'

10. Once language has been used with confidence,

    a) work in groups of four, preparing to complete a task, with answers given by pupil or teacher;

    b) pupils working in pairs;

    c) pupils preparing a task directed at a briefed assistant;

    d) all of the above benefit from being acted out, taped or video-recorded;

    e) the 'situation' should be applied in real life on any visit to France.

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7. Reading

Elizabeth Holden

For the purposes of this chapter the term 'reading' has been interpreted as meaning that reading which is done by secondary school pupils outside the confines of their ordinary course books. There is no room to present a manual on the theory and mechanics of teaching pupils to read in the same way as they were taught to interpret the printed symbols of their own language. Clearly, at this age, they know what it means to read, and they ought to be made well aware that reading will play an important part in their foreign language learning. They start their foreign language reading from the first French word that they are shown, and expect that gradually they will learn to build words into sentences, and sentences into texts, until they are able to produce written work themselves.

They will also discover that eventually their reading will lead to comprehension passages with questions to answer, and it is probable that many pupils (if they think about it at all) regard the reading element of their learning merely as one of the tools with which they will master L2, less than an enriching and rewarding experience in its own right.

This chapter seeks to help the teacher to present reading activities in such a way that pupils will actively enjoy what they are doing and unconsciously extend their knowledge in the other skills. For too long, teachers, as well as pupils, have looked upon reading in the way described above - a means to an end, needed only to meet the examination requirements in the future. Teachers have not appreciated the difficulty of persuading the pupils of the value of reading when they have not been accustomed to recognising it as an integral part of the syllabus. We have all encountered A-level students of English and French who are opposed to reading any but the three or four set texts on which they expect to be questioned in the examination. This attitude is the result of inadequate conditioning throughout the earlier years of FL learning and the blame must be laid firmly on the teaching programme, with the solution resting in their own hands. Reading should have been made an integral part of L2 studies from the very beginning. The pleasure and confidence that arise from the ability to read, which generates greater confidence and ability, so that the pupils are largely unaware that they are constantly tackling reading matter of increasing difficulty, and a vocabulary that is not strictly based on the structures presented in their course books.

A further aim of this chapter is to explain the importance of this skill in the learning of a foreign language and to give a practical reference of ideas to be borrowed, used, and adapted. These are offered with the scarcity of time and money (the two most important commodities for any teacher) borne uppermost in mind, and are practical ideas, involving very little expense or preparation. They are offered in the hope that more teachers will accept the principle of establishing reading as one of the essential elements of the foreign language learner's diet.

Here, to perhaps a greater degree even than the other language skills, the attitude of teachers themselves is of paramount importance. If reading is devalued, by being relegated only to the last ten minutes of the lesson, then it will not be seen as an essential element of the course. A relaxed attitude that allows a teacher to devote the occasional lesson entirely to reading (silent, aloud, in pairs, in small groups as appropriate), is the attitude that is needed. Many teachers feel guilty, as though they are not doing justice to their pupils, if they are not actively engaged in teaching. They feel they ought to be instructing, prompting responses, stimulating dialogue or generally testing the pupils' progress in some way.

However, it is not true that learning is only taking place when the pupil is actively producing the language. The receptive skill of reading is of great importance, equal to that of listening, which is always recognised as a skill to be practised in class time. Reading time should be seen as a gift of time in which the pupils learn to apply and develop their powers of concentration, and obtain the type of satisfaction and pleasure similar to the contentment that they experience when reading in their own language. An atmosphere of shared enjoyment in which the pupil and teacher alike can indulge is a good thing to create, and it all helps to lay the foundations of good out-of-class reading activity which is, after all, the main purpose of the exercise.

Contact with the spoken language can only be provided in the classroom, whereas, providing that the teacher has used lesson time to show the pupils how to organise their reading, how long to spend on it, what their expectations should be, and above all, has motivated them with his or her own enthusiasm, reading can, for the most part, be built up outside school hours. If teachers feel that silent reading in class is an uneconomical use of time, they should bear in mind that there is nowadays such an emphasis on the productive skills that it sometimes has the effect of weakening the receptive skills by limiting them to the narrow experience of the few items of language already covered in the course book. In reading, the reverse is true. Learners are not confined to their own experience in listening and speaking. They develop from what they already know, build on and around it, and have to use their deductive powers to extract meaning. L2 learners can always understand much more than they are able to produce. Teachers often fail to exploit this, tending to shy away from giving to first-year pupils readers that are not structurally based on the material they are learning. In reality, pupils can cope very well with new, unknown vocabulary, enjoy what to them is a guessing-game activity by using the pictures, the context, the known words, and their own deductive powers, to extract meaning.

Any teacher who feels the need for any further justification for using class time for a 'receptive' rather than a 'productive' activity, should bear in mind the usefulness of the reading skill after learning in school is finished. Pupils will quickly accept that the more often they practise reading a passage or short story, and are able to give a brief outline of what they have discovered, the more skilled they will be when they are in a real-life situation, and need to pick out the salient points in a poster, an announcement, or a notice. They will appreciate the broadening of their vocabulary, and derive considerable satisfaction from their ever-increasing ability to recognise part of a familiar word within an unknown one, to see the similarity of a word with one in their own language, and to investigate the meaning, like detectives using their powers of deduction. With this, as with all aspects of L2 learning, the pupils should be made aware of the reasons and usefulness of each activity, and made to feel that there is order and a definite framework to everything the teacher proposes and introduces.

The teacher should make use of all the different ways of reading: intensively, extensively, reading at speed, in class, in groups, in pairs and (for the younger pupils) reading individually to the teacher. Practice of all the different methods should be regular, never repeating the same pattern in successive lessons or too frequently. Some find silent reading and concentration on their book in class well nigh impossible, and have great difficulty in achieving total isolation. For these pupils the session should never be allowed to be too long, and other activities should be devised so that they are not left feeling inadequate and discouraged. Teachers should sympathise with the pupils in commenting how very difficult it is to achieve complete involvement and to exclude everything else. Encouragement to 'read aloud' in their head often helps, but teachers should at the same time be aware of the disadvantages of their pupils 'mouthing' or verbalising the words in the early stages as it will slow them down considerably later, if they have allowed themselves to get fixed on this habit.

The teacher's sympathy and understanding should also be very evident when talking to older pupils about the range of books available to them. Although there are now many series of readers on the market, so that in theory it should be possible for each child to find a book that is at his or her own level of sophistication, it is unlikely in practice that the school will have a great variety of newer books, or that there will be a wide selection available to each member of the department. The teacher should apologise frankly to the pupils and explain that they will sometimes be asked to read a selection of books very far removed from what might be their choice in their own language. Children approached in this way respond very readily and accept that they may have to labour on with material that is basically outside their natural interests, and often a little 'young' for them. If they know for certain that every bit of reading that they do will contribute to their style and fluency in written and spoken work, then they are usually ready to co-operate. Teachers should never pretend that all the reading material that they offer is going to interest all their pupils, but should state the situation honestly. In this way the class enter into a kind of conspiracy with the teacher, agree to tackle whatever is proposed because they have accepted the underlying principles explained to them, and do not feel deceived and disappointed. Neither are they afraid to tell the teacher that a particular book bores them and that they would like to leave it and try another, when they know that they will get a sympathetic reception. Far more is gained by this method and by the teacher encouraging pupils' feelings of superiority towards the often thin, unfunny little stories that they are being asked to read, than by the teacher feigning critical surprise that they didn't manage to get on with a particular book. It is to be hoped that over the years the department will build up a good stock of readers gradually so that eventually there will be a better chance of pupils finding more acceptable books. Some departments write and print their own.

With intensive speed-reading it is very easy for the pupils to see the usefulness of being able to read a short passage in a given time, and then finding out how well they have understood it, and how successful or otherwise was their self-insulation from the rest of the class and from external distractions. Children usually respond very readily to this kind of self-analysis, which is quick and easy to organise. Two minutes on a page, strictly timed, and then a battery of questions fired at them, each requiring one word answers (in English perhaps) quickly establishes which pupils are getting something out of their reading, and which pupils have allowed their minds to wander. It is seen to be a useful training for in-depth, short-term concentration and pupils seem, almost without exception, to be very interested in this activity. The teacher can use it for any required purpose, either for content, fact, vocabulary, or grammatical structures.

Of course, the more traditional method of a text followed by written comprehension questions and answers is another method of establishing how efficient and intensive the reading has been, but this should only be used very sparingly, as it is such a familiar and uninteresting course book technique, doubtless encountered by the pupils in many other subjects. Also, it really belongs to the productive skill of writing, and has the discouraging aspect that when the response is basically right, in the sense that it answers the question, it is often deemed wrong because it contains faults of syntax. Additionally, the teacher should beware of using a method that is so lacking in warmth and joint participation. With the two minute speed-reading passage, and the immediate nature of the check to establish the efficiency of the pupil's reading, there is a tangible participation in the exchange between the pupil and the teacher, and a quick and satisfying assessment. In fact, this exercise is a good example of the importance in L2 teaching of identifying with the pupils, and lavishing constant praise and encouragement beyond the bounds of the actual value of each small triumph.

To vary the speed-reading activity, one or two short questions can be put on the board before books are allowed to be opened, and pupils directed to put their hands up as soon as they have found the answers; they then note down the time that it took them.

Extensive, global or 'gist' reading, as has already been explained, needs little or no justification as to its usefulness in a real-life situation. It is also remarkably difficult to establish with older pupils who have not been accustomed to practise it over the early years of their learning. It is hard to wean them away from the painful word-for-word translation which is all too common among older, poorly trained students. It is even harder to persuade them that they know far more than they think they do, and that it is unnecessary for them to understand every word in order to get the gist of the whole. If they read the whole sentence at once, used all the inferential help which they could glean from the surrounding text, did some intelligent guesswork in identifying words similar to the English, and above all if they burned their pocket dictionaries, they would quickly become efficient and boost their own confidence.

Gist reading is a good confidence-building exercise, and can be most amusingly practised by occasionally using translations of familiar folk or fairy tales. These can often be quite difficult to understand for pupils who have not been taught from an early age to see through all the unfamiliar vocabulary and structures, and to pick out the vital words that are going to give them a clue to the story. This training can start in the very first year with the reading sheets available in, for example, En Avant, Stage III. With these large wall sheets the teacher can show all the class at once how to give the gist, and not the translation, of a paragraph. This is useful basic training, and if sustained through the next years, will stand oral/examination candidates in good stead as they struggle to comprehend their reading passage and demonstrate their understanding in the ten minutes at their disposal. It is very easy to distinguish, from their inflection, those who have a complete understanding of the text, from those who are simply reading a sequence of words which, to them, have no related meaning.

* * *

Let us now look at the five years of secondary school FL learning and see what ideas and activities we can use. In the first year, as indeed with all the others, the reading programme falls into two distinct categories: reading in the classroom and reading at home. Within the classroom, reading starts very modestly with flashcards containing one word and then a whole sentence. The children can be required to work in groups or individually, but usually group work is much more popular. They can be asked simply to read from reading cards. En Avant Stage II cards are a good model, for they are clear and easy to make, and the teacher can select material from his own course to put on cards similar to them.

It might be worth mentioning here that the department need not despair at the thought of so much card needed, and then not used again until the following year. A very good method of making these cards is to cover white card with plastic-coated material, and then to write on it the sentence that is currently required with a water-based felt tip pen. This sentence can then be easily wiped off and the card used over and over again in the same way for other material. Pupils can match these sentence-cards with the correct picture, or place a number of them in the correct sequence. They can be given halved sentences to match with a suitable completion, or given envelopes each containing six familiar sentences, cut either into individual words or phrases, which they must then organise into six correct sentences. Children enjoy this type of group work, and if the groups have been carefully balanced able/less able, to avoid the same one winning all the time, a lot of useful work can be achieved in a painless way. These activities can also be linked with listening to a recording of the sentences or the teacher reading the target sentences: this means that the children have the added dimension of hearing what they are reading, which is more satisfactory, and lays down good sound recognition skills.

Many courses have linked readers, based on the structures employed, and some have tapes to go with them. If there are none, the teacher can read to the class while they follow the text in their books or read a simple description of one of the well-known characters in the course, while the children try to be the first to find the correct page in the book. Definitions and descriptions of people or things written on card and held up for the children to guess are also very popular. (Je suis grand, je porte des lunettes, je n'aime pas les vers. Je m'appelle . . . . . ; Je suis rouge et jaune. Je suis très jolie, je suis dans le jardin. Je suis une . . . . . .) Before long the children are able to make up their own definitions to put to the rest of the class, especially if they work together in small groups to produce a few, based perhaps on their reading books.

If, however, there are no commercially produced readers with the course, it is not too difficult to make attractive home-made reading cards with pictures cut from magazines and a few well-presented descriptive sentences to go underneath them. Teachers need not feel that they have to do all the work of finding suitable pictures. If they just find one to show the class the type and size of picture required, pupils are usually more than ready to bring along at least one each, so that the most attractive can be selected and mounted on card. Quite often 3rd and 4th year pupils like to undertake the writing of the sentences under the pictures, which means that the energies of one class are being used to help another, while both sets of children benefit.

The department will usually be able to afford a dozen or so short general readers for each first year class and these should be selected with an eye to their attractiveness, the quality of their illustrations, the clarity of the text, and above all appropriate length. It is better not to have one for each child but rather to have enough for about a third of the class at a time, so that immediately there is a scarcity value which makes the children keener to claim a book when their turn comes round. Ideally, each class should have about a dozen titles and each child be given two or three nights to borrow a book. My pupils then write the title of the book they have read on the inside cover of their exercise book before bringing it back and waiting their turn to borrow another. Gradually, during the course of the year, most of them will have had the chance to read all twelve books and will have derived great satisfaction from having done this. This has proved to be a painless and popular method of encouraging children to read, so that they never feel pressurised but can set their own target for themselves.

The pleasure aspect of reading should be accepted, and no questions or exercises set on this leisure activity. When the children encounter words they have not met before, they should be encouraged to guess, using the pictures and remaining text as clues. It is very rare that they still claim not to be able to understand the gist meaning of the whole. From time to time the teacher should ask the pupils how they enjoyed that book or this, whether it was better than the one they read previously, what they liked and disliked, and in general what they thought of it. It is really essential that the teacher shows great interest in this modest reading programme and knows just how many books each child has read. A quick look at the length of the list on the inside cover of the exercise book can soon prompt an encouraging or flattering remark. It is also very important that each child be called to read aloud (quietly and in private) to the teacher at this early stage, and to have a mark or grade recorded. If it is accepted as a natural, regular part of the proceedings, the children become gradually less nervous of the idea of doing something on their own; if the rest of the class are engrossed in group work at the time, the general background hum conveniently covers any embarrassment. The value of reading aloud and the obvious difficulties of attempting to cope simultaneously with the pronunciation and the meaning have been extensively investigated over recent years. However, for young children, on a one-to-one basis with the teacher, tackling a paragraph or so at a time, the activity more than proves its worth in promoting and reinforcing a good teacher/pupil relationship. Even the least able like to have their reading assessed and to be encouraged individually, and above all to have a few minutes of personal contact with the teacher. It is something of a shock and a salutary experience for any teacher to meet a pupil for a CSE or 'O' level practice, and to realise ~~this~~ is the first one-to-one contact with a particular pupil. Few young pupils, if any, can resist the opportunity to demonstrate how they are getting on, and to have the teacher take a private interest in them alone.

* * *

Thus the children arrive at the beginning of the second year with a sense of achievement, ready to embark on the next set of more 'adult' readers, of which there are two different types: those attached to the course book and those which have been selected as general readers. In this second year, it is wiser not to continue the same procedure as for the first, as it is important to have a variety of approaches, and more flattering to the children if they appreciate that they are now more capable of organising their own reading programme.

Reading that takes place within class time can be heavily group-centred, with the children each reading paragraphs or taking parts in a simple play preparatory to memorised role-playing. Reading-games such as matching job descriptions to various careers (lawyer, pilot, baker, etc), placing town, river, mountain, region descriptions onto the corresponding correct place on a map, following a short list of instructions devised by another group (thereby practising imperatives), can all be interspersed with short silent reading periods and intensive reading activities as described earlier.

If the teacher does have a set of readers available (such as those that accompany En Avant Stage 4a), then occasional quiet class reading sessions can be used. The children can easily share, so that half-sets are viable, and this particular series is very inexpensive. The teacher should have a realistic aim in mind, not being over-dogmatic about whether or not certain goals are in fact achieved, and only try to cover about three of these short readers in class time in any one term. Of course, if the story has had to be abandoned at a crucial stage and there are enough books to go round, then he might let the children take them home, using this as one of the homework tasks for that week. Some of these linked readers have very useful short sets of multiple-choice comprehension exercises at the back, with the answers given over the page, so that the children can check their own understanding. Again, the shortness of the book is an important element and the children should never be given a book that could discourage them by its length. Immediate indication of correctness is also a good motivator.

* * *

In the third and fourth years the carrier-bag library can be introduced. The teacher needs only as many books are there are children in the class, and possibly one or two extra if they are available. Each child is given a book at the beginning of the year, and the list of books issued written in columns across the top of the register or mark book. Pupils may read their book in their own time, and have it crossed off the list in the register each time they return it in exchange for a new one. The aim is for each pupil to read as many books as there are pupils. There should be two set days in the week when they are allowed to change their books and get someone else's. This greatly reduces the number of occasions on which the teacher has to deal with this operation. Again, the teacher's interest in the children's comments about the books should be sincere and attentive and short summaries can be written (in either language) to give weight to the activity. No child should be made to feel deficient in any way because he or she simply disliked a book. Of course, in the average class, only half a dozen children will achieve the goal, but this is only to be anticipated and no excessive harassment to hurry up should be evident. Those who are really keen on the subject take great pride in seeing their list grow, and this is recompense in itself.

Another reading activity popular in the middle years of the secondary school is to give out what are for the class very easy readers, and ask them to summarize the story in a few lines of English and to attach the paper to the front of the book, for the use of a set of younger pupils. They can devise a few questions to put with the summary, and attach another sheet of paper to the back cover of the book with the answers on it. Fourth year pupils like doing this, and get great satisfaction when they see how easily they can skim through an elementary reader, and then with a friend get practice themselves in thinking up simple 'Qui?', 'Que?', 'Pourquoi?', 'Quand?' type questions. Pair and group work is still very popular at this stage, and many of the activities previously described are still acceptable as long as they are presented at a more sophisticated level.

Third and fourth year pupils enjoy activities like preparing and reading out each other's horoscope predictions (one group writing for another); exchanging with another group five questions devised between them on a timed reading paragraph, involving the usual question words or certain words or phrases pre-selected by the teacher; thinking up a suitable title for a short paragraph and comparing their idea with those of the other groups, as they pass the paragraphs from group to group as soon as they have reached agreement; gap-filling exercises, where the blanks can be anything that the teacher wishes to practise at that point. There are many more reading activities like these that can be produced by one group for the reception of the next, thus freeing the teacher to monitor what is happening and to be available when called by any group. These older pupils also enjoy writing definitions and crossword clues for their friends in another group to solve, and then solving theirs; and, if the group is small enough, even the shyest usually enjoys the occasional role-playing session.

As Roy Dunning mentions in his earlier chapter, it is at this stage of activity that teachers need to define their own attitude to error. Clearly, for sheets of questions to be handed on to other learners in other classes accuracy is essential, and teachers will need to check pupils' suggestions. In this kind of activity where pupils produce ephemeral items for their classmates, such as crosswords or riddles, error is less important provided communication takes place satisfactorily.

It is also possible for pupils at this stage to write and illustrate short stories for use with younger pupils (with the teacher again checking accuracy). Often, the freshness of the ideas and the illustrations exceed those found in published materials. The finished product gives a fully deserved feeling of achievement to the pupil-authors and often amuses the younger target audience.

* * *

These class-based reading activities can all be used in the fifth year as well, but probably not quite so frequently, as the pressure to cover all aspects of the examination syllabus increases. However, the principles remain the same; the gradual acquisition of language takes place only when the pupils are exposed to as many varied activities as it is possible to devise.

The fifth year reading programme (the carrier-bag library again) may well be less ambitious than the fourth year one, with the exception of those few pupils for whom languages are going to be their chosen field for further study. For the remainder, the majority of the class, there will be a wide overlap and a backlog of books left over from the fourth year programme which will carry them through. It is unrealistic to expect them to read very much after the Easter of their last year, so that there are effectively only two terms.

During the first year that this reading programme operates the teacher will have to read most of the books suggested. As the books are obviously considerably longer, it would be unreasonable to expect pupils to embark on one without first having some idea of whether they might enjoy it. It is wise to have a short summary of the story line laid out so that they can quickly skim through it and see if anything appeals to them. When they have finished a book they may be willing to add to the comments already made about it either by the teacher or by previous pupils, so that in years to come, other pupils will have a clearer idea about the chances of their enjoying it. Parts of lessons can be set aside from time to time in which the pupils each talk briefly in the FL about the book they are currently reading, or one that they think is worth recommending to the rest of the class. This preparation can have been set for homework, so that pupils do not feel that they have been asked to undertake an extra task. The teacher should be careful to match the book to the ability of the pupil, and not encourage the weaker pupil to tackle the more demanding material which will prove too hard and discouraging.

* * *

To conclude then, throughout the whole programme the keynote should be a built-in sense of achievement and success. It is most unwise to offer books that are too difficult at any stage as the fragile interest will immediately wane. Properly and thoughtfully used, these ideas can help to stimulate the less able as successfully as the bright. However, even the most pliant and enthusiastic pupil loses interest when faced with a predictable, well-worn lesson pattern. The teacher should be aware of this and consciously avoid the over-use of any activity. By subtle coaxing and encouragement and by using attractive and frequently changed approaches to the reading programme, the pupils' interest will be sustained and will develop. Many different materials and series of readers are now available, and a judicious mixture of these and the type of activities described above should lead to variety in class work. As important as this emphasis on variety of approach is the interest and involvement of the teacher, which underlies all successful language learning. In few other subjects, if any, is the transmission of personal vitality and enthusiasm of so great an importance.

NOTES

Of interest to readers of this chapter are the following:

Beattie, N: 'What constitutes a good reader?' Modern Languages, vol. 51, September 1970.

Brown, E W, ed: Teaching materials for French. CILT, 1980. Also see Teaching materials for Spanish. CILT, 1978. Teaching materials for German. CILT, 1977. Teaching materials for Russian. CILT, 1978.

8. Writing

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In order to give a context to what follows, we shall begin with a brief outline of the circumstances in which we work in Loughborough. The school is a small (six-form entry) 11-to-18 comprehensive; most of the children come from families which are towards the lower end of the Registrar General's classificiations. French is compulsory in the first three years and is part of the option scheme in the fourth and fifth years. In years one and two the children are taught in mixed-ability groups (in French there is no remedial extraction). In the third year they are set three-deep in two equal bands.

Language is both a written and a spoken means of communication and, although this article is concerned mainly with writing, we should perhaps point out that we believe that the development of the oral skills is very important. We also think that there are valid reasons, both theoretical and practical, for introducing the written word at an early stage and for devoting time to it. How, then, do we justify written work?

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

We think that it has several practical advantages. In mixed-ability groups, where it is especially important to be aware of the problems of the individual child, the teacher can be freed during the written part of the lesson to deal with the children as individuals. Equally, as many schools now work in fairly long blocks of time (one hour ten minutes in our case) the written work removes some of the physical and mental strain from both teacher and taught; it is surely unreasonable to expect all children to concentrate on oral work for such a long stretch of time, or any teacher to conduct oral lessons for so long. Because we include writing in our course, it is easier to provide a variety of tasks, and to structure the tasks so that we cater for all the abilities in a particular group. We also think that writing provides us with a useful means of checking whether our pupils have understood or not, and of assessing their progress.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As well as the more practical considerations we think that there are valid educational reasons for including writing in our course. Our pupils do not have a course book in the early stages (we produce most of our own material) so their exercise book becomes a reference book; it has the added advantage of being expressed in terms with which they are familiar as it is they who have compiled it. We also think, especially for the more able pupils, that writing gives them a better opportunity to work out for themselves and to reflect upon the grammar rules as they see patterns emerge. This is important particularly for those elements which are not apparent in speech and which might be clarified in writing, e.g. ils/elles mangent. Furthermore, some pupils will need to develop the ability to spell in the foreign language; the experience of writing is one important tool in achieving this aim.

Before we go on to specific examples of the types of written work we require, it must be emphasized that anything which is written will almost always have been practised orally and that in the early stages the written word reflects to a great extent the pupil-teacher dialogue.

TYPES OF WRITING - YEARS ONE TO THREE

New Vocabulary

In the early stages, new vocabulary is all represented pictorially by the children in their books with a written description beside it. The vocabulary we use is fairly limited so the process is not too time-consuming. As time goes on, and gets shorter, pupils are encouraged to write vocabulary lists in their books in the traditional way, though, as far as possible, new vocabulary is introduced and taught without the use of English, i.e. by synonyms, drawings, etc.

New Structures

New structures are introduced by using question-and-answer sequences. Questions are not only used as a means of eliciting information from children but also for providing them with both information and the new structures. For example, when first year pupils are learning '-er' verbs they are given a picture in which all of the elements, apart from the new form, are known and they are asked a series of questions about it. Thus, a drawing of a boy going into a church, with the clock hands pointing to nine o'clock elicits the following questions: 1.Qui arrive à l'église? 2. Il y arrive à quelle heure? 3. Est-ce qu'il arrive à l'école? 4. Que fait-il à neuf heures? The principle is that the children will have seen and written the new verb form several times before they are required to produce it in response to a 'Que fait . . . .?' question.

This kind of approach is used throughout the school when new structures are presented. One further example should perhaps be given. When the perfect tense is introduced pupils are asked to perform various actions, e.g. 'Va au tableau! Ecris ton nom! Dessine une chaise!' When this process has been completed, the teacher and pupils go through a question and answer sequence, e.g. 'Qui est allé au tableau? Qu'est -ce qu'il a écrit? Qu'est ce-qu'il a dessiné?' so that, again, the pupils are introduced to the new verb-forms through the medium of the question.

Continuous Writing

The question-and-answer technique is a first step in teaching pupils to produce pieces of written French. The content of the answer has been previously fed in and can readily be retrieved. The pupils, having acquired the ability to frame sentences, progress through intermediate stages culminating in creative continuous writing. These intermediate stages include: 1) Retelling a story 2) A diary 3) Descriptions from visual stimuli.

(1) Retelling a story
Here the pupil is given an extract of French narrative and instructed to rewrite it in a different person; for example, the pupil may be directed to reproduce a text as if he or she were the person telling the story.

(2) A diary
After intensive oral practice a diary provides the children with the opportunity to write within their linguistic competence. For example:

M. DUVAL LUNDI 15 JANVIER JOURNEE A PARIS

10h rencontrer Georges et discuter de quelques problèmes

12h déjeuner au restaurant

2h30 assister à une réunion

5h15 prendre le train pour Rouen

A child could simply give the perfect tense forms of the verbs provided in reply to questions in French, e.g. il a rencontré, etc, or expand considerably on the outline provided, e.g. Il a pris le train pour aller à Paris où il a dû rencontrer Georges pour discuter des problèmes, etc.

(3) Descriptions from visual stimuli
A series of pictures is given and, again, after oral practice to provide guidance, the pupil is required to tell the story portrayed in the pictures. This exercise gives the pupil the opportunity to draw on what he knows, and to make use of what he has learned over quite a long period of time.

Texts

In the early stages a written text is used to consolidate items studied separately beforehand. For instance, the following extract is taken from a text which is used at the end of a block of work presenting reflexive verbs:

Text 1 (2nd year)

La journée de Renée Lebon

Tous les jours sauf le samedi et le dimanche, Renée Lebon se réveille à 7h. Elle se lève dix minutes plus tard, puis elle entre dans la salle de bains où elle se lave. A 7h25 elle s'habille dans sa chambre. A 8h moins 25 elle descend dans la cuisine pour prendre son petit déjeuner. Elle mange toujours du pain avec du beurre et elle boit du café au lait . . . .

If it seems appropriate, questions in English might be used as an aid to comprehension, and to provide reassurance for the weaker pupils.

(1) At what time does Renée wake up?

(2) Does she wake up at that time every day?

(3) Does she get up immediately?

(4) Where does she go first? What for? etc.

If not really necessary, the English questions are not used.

However, the questions in French increase in difficulty to cater for the whole ability range. All pupils attempt the first few questions, the answers to which can be lifted direct from the text. The later ones are designed to be more testing and might only be attempted by the more adventurous pupils. Here is a sample of questions with the answers we would expect:

1. A 7h Renée se lève ou se réveille?	1. Elle se réveille.
2. A quelle heure s'habille-t-elle?	2. A sept heurs vingt-cinq.
3. Où se lave-t-elle?	3. Dans la salle de bains.
4. Que mange-t-elle au petit déjeuner.	4. Du pain avec du beurre.
5. Est-ce qu'elle boit du thé?	5. Non, elle boit du café.
6. Que fait-elle dans la salle de bains?	6. Elle se lave.

The following require a more thorough understanding of the text, the ability to deduce answers and to manipulate structures:

7. Qu'est-ce qu'elle fait dans la cuisine?	7. Elle prend son petit déjeuner.
8. Quels jours se réveille-t-elle à 7h?	8. Le lundi, le mardi, le mercredi, le jeudi, le vendredi.
9. A quelle heure se lève-t-elle?	9. A sept heures dix.

Text 2 (3rd year)

Un Vol

(The boy telling the story is called Jean-Paul.)

> Alors j'ai décidé d'appeler la police: je suis entré dans le café d'en face et j'ai téléphoné à la police. Les gendarmes sont arrivés deux minutes plus tard dans leur camionette. Ils ont arrêté les trois voleurs qui allaient s'enfuir; ils leur ont mis les menottes aux mains - le chef de la police m'a félicité: il m'a dit: 'Bravo, mon garçon! Tu as fait du bon travail - c'est très bien".

(A)

1. Why did Jean-Paul go to the café?
2. What happened 2 minutes later?
3. What were the thieves going to do when the police arrived?

(B)

1. Est-ce que Jean-Paul a téléphoné à des amis?

2. Quand les gendarmes sont-ils arrivés?
3. Est-ce qu'ils sont arrivés à pied?
4. Qu'est-ce que les gendarmes ont fait alors?
5. Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait aux mains des voleurs?
6. Pourquoi le chef de la police a-t-il félicité Jean-Paul?

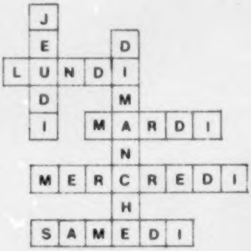
After oral preparation (in French) the better pupils might write two or three sentences leading up to the events here described.

Miscellaneous

The aim of these items is to provide activities that are more varied than conventional language exercises, to provide practice in specific language elements in an enjoyable manner, i.e. revision or reinforcement of current work, and to provide the teacher with feed-back on pupils' understanding. Most of the suggestions can be used as short but useful activities - five minutes or so. These activities can be easily adapted to accommodate a wide variety of language elements throughout the first three years and none of them need be so complicated as to involve the teacher in lengthy preparation: 1) Crossword acrostics 2) Replacing pictures with words 3) Matching sentences 4) Completing sentences 5) Unravelling words 6) Unravelling sentences 7) Language laboratory activity 8) Letters to pen-friends.

1. Crossword acrostics

Using very simple techniques, simple crosswords and acrostics can be compiled containing current or remedial language work, e.g. days of the week:



Which day
is missing?

2. Replacing pictures with words

This activity is restricted to those language elements whose meaning might be portrayed visually. It is ideal for reinforcing lexical items in the early stages but can also be expanded. For example the teacher can write sentences on the blackboard, omitting all concrete nouns and replacing them with pictures or drawings, or simply the initial letters of the words. The pupils then write out the sentences, replacing the pictures or initials with words. It should be pointed out that pupils and teacher soon establish a tacit understanding concerning the conventions of symbols and simplistic portrayals.

3. Matching Sentences

This activity gives pupils practice in recognising words which are likely to collocate: it stresses meaning rather than grammatical components. 'Il regarde la radio', whilst feasible in a specific context, is unlikely to occur frequently. For example:

elle est allé à la boucherie	et	elle a acheté de l'aspirine
elle a joué au tenis	et	elle a acheté de la viande
elle est allé à la pharmacie	et	elle a gagné

4. Completing Sentences

These may be constructed to allow a lot or a little creativity, depending on the teacher's aim. 'Il joue . . . .' allows more choice than 'il joue au . . . .' Completion exercises can be played as a game. Thus, a pupil who succeeds in writing an answer which no other pupil has written gains two points, everyone else one point. Alternatively, the scoring system can be changed if the teacher is concentrating on correct spellings.

5. Unravelling Words

This is a quick and simple lexical game which aims to encourage pupils to check spellings. Pupils who have been dealing with occupations might work with 'eiolpts' (pilotes) or 'arisceteer' (secrétaire). Definitions may be used in conjunction with this activity, e.g. il/elle travaille pour Air France or il/elle travaille avec une machine à écrire.

6. Unravelling Sentences

Essentially this exercise involves the manipulation of fundamental linguistic concepts, such as the position of the adjective in French, e.g. filles les yeux ces bruns ont.

7. Language Laboratory Activity

It is now accepted that the language laboratory can most profitably be used as a listening machine. In this case, writing might be used as evidence of listening with understanding, such as following instructions, writing answers to questions, making transcriptions or doing blank-filling exercises.

Pupils might fill in blanks with words which they hear on tape, in a type of dictation exercise, or the teacher might delete specific categories of words from a passage, e.g. all the adjectives or all the articles, etc.

Alternatively, within the normal classroom, blank-filling involves the pupils in using a partially completed text to insert appropriate lexis. The teacher may wish his pupils to have a free choice, or he could provide the pupils with a list of vocabulary. The difficulty of this exercise might be varied by adding surplus lexis which is not used.

8. Letters to penfriends

This exercise is potentially one of the most meaningful in which pupils might be engaged. Meaningful communication involves contacts with real people who speak the foreign language:

> 'When children are asked to write an essay, or pretend to write a letter to a friend, or an account of some incident or other, they have to provide an address of their own and find for themselves the kind of social stance which it is appropriate to take with their imagined friend. Some language learners do, of course, acquire this ability to set up a communication situation but many do not. Most language learners find it very difficult to assume an addressee and to persuade themselves that they are engaged in some kind of meaningful act'.[1]

All pupils should, if possible, be encouraged to have penfriends; the exchange of letters is probably most profitable as a class exercise in the early stages. The teacher must obviously guide the letters but a different theme could be chosen for each exchange. Topics such as 'l'école' might provide interesting, meaningful themes involving vocabulary expansion and manipulation of simple structures for a series of lessons - meaningful, since the pupils are aware that the information will be communicated to real people and not awarded a mark out of ten. Younger pupils might need to add personal messages in their own language. Obviously penfriend exchanges depend on contacts in foreign schools. If these are not available through Local Authority schemes (like Leicestershire with Normandy and the Saarland), then the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges can help, as can the Modern Language Association.

Marking

Written work generates marking, and inevitably decisions have to be made about how the work will be marked. A certain amount can be done in class, either by the teacher marking while the pupils are writing, or by the teacher, or pupil, writing questions and answers on the board. Both these systems have the advantage of providing immediate correction and preventing the learning of incorrect forms; on the other hand, not all pupils are observant enough for the blackboard method to be completely reliable and so the books must still be checked by the teacher. The other major problem, apart from finding the time and accepting the tedium, is whether or not all errors should be corrected, because standards may have to vary according to the pupils' differing abilities. For those pupils who are likely to continue with French and who are likely to be entered for public examinations, the correction must be thorough. However, for those who are less able, it seems more sensible to concentrate on one error at a time as pupils are likely to be quickly discouraged if their work is always thoroughly marked. This more liberal system can create problems when pupils use their books for checking spellings. Perhaps the solution to this dilemma is to always make sure that new items are correctly spelt and to encourage pupils to check only from them. This approach seeks to use marking as a teaching device and to encourage pupils to learn from their mistakes. However, it does carry the additional problem of having to decide if a numerical mark should be put at the end of the exercise as, all too often, pupils are concerned only with the mark and not with their mistakes.

THE FOURTH AND FIFTH YEARS

In the fourth and fifth years the need to prepare pupils for public examinations becomes more pressing and so influences the choice of written tasks which we ask of our pupils. We are gratified that fairly large numbers of our pupils choose to take French in the fourth and fifth years and we are able to offer courses to 'O' Level (AEB), CSE French (MODE 3), and French Studies (Mode 1). We guide into French studies those pupils who have enjoyed French but who would have serious difficulty in coping with the demands of a conventional French CSE course; they are able to develop their understanding of the language but are not required to write in French.

In the fourth year we do not usually make a distinction between the pupils who are preparing for 'O' Level and CSE. Our broad aims are similar at this stage, i.e. to complete the teaching of the grammatical structures which are required for both examinations, to extend vocabulary and to develop the ability to write longer pieces of French with limited guidance.

The introduction of new grammar is done in the same way as in years one to three, though at this stage pupils are encouraged to keep their own grammar notebooks as a source of reference. The amount of pictorial material is less, because as pupils have a much wider vocabulary, we can use more verbal stimuli. When we are teaching avant de/après avoir we might ask pupils to re-express a series of statements, e.g. 'Jeanne a mangé puis elle est allé au cinéma'. They would then re-write this as either 'Jeanne a mangé avant d'aller au cinéma.' or 'Jeanne est allé au cinéma après avoir mangé.'

Texts

Texts are used increasingly as a means a) of extending vocabulary, b) of allowing pupils to write about their own experiences, and c) of acquainting them with the type of text set by the AEB in the Use of French paper.

When we are teaching the imperfect tense we always ask the assistante to write about her experiences at school (describing daily routine) and after oral work based on the text the pupils talk first and then write about their own daily routine at primary school. Thus they have the opportunity to write freely, but they are not constantly frustrated by a lack of vocabulary and ideas. Texts from various sources, e.g. On parle Français, Faits divers, are used to develop the ability to answer questions which require manipulation of the grammatical structures, in particular texts written in dialogue form, e.g. 'Mais quand il veut de l'eau pour se laver je lui en donne un seau.' (On parle Français, Book 3, page 35.) about which third-person questions in a past tense can be asked, e.g. Que faisait-elle lorsqu'il demandait de l'eau pour se laver?

We hope that by using material of this kind we shall develop in our pupils the ability to look carefully at questions, to see exactly what they ask for and respond appropriately. A written exercise of this kind is usually given only after thorough oral preparation, perhaps as a written homework.

Essay writing using a series of pictures

This kind of essay is tackled in various ways, and again never without thorough oral preparation. If we take just one picture from a series as an example, pupils might work out a present-tense account of the events portrayed, then be asked to write a version in the past tenses at home, e.g. 'M. et Mme. Wright ont décidé de passer leurs vacances en France. Ils arrivent à Douvres à 11.30 pour prendre le bateau. Après avoir montré leur passeports à la douane ils passent sur le bateau.' Or they might be given a series of questions, the answers to which form the essay, e.g. 'Où M. et Mme. Wright ont-ils décidé de passer leurs vacances? Ils sont arrivés à Douvres à quelle heure? Pourquoi faire?' Or they might be asked to do a gap-filling exercise in which, say, the verbs are missing, e.g. 'M. et Mme Wright - décidé de pass- leurs vacances en France. Ils - à Douvres à 11.30 pour prend- le bateau. Après - montré leur passeport.'

Other Activities

Among many other activities which can lead on to useful written work, we have tried these and found them reasonably successful.

During an exchange visit fourth year pupils interviewed our French guests, with the help of duplicated questions. They then wrote a description of the person they had interviewed.

Films like Toute la bande (Mary Glasgow Publications) allow ample scope for oral work, and then the material can be used as a basis for essay writing or for a question-and-answer exercise. Tape-recorded material (interviews with French children, short news items, etc) can lead to interesting and useful written work, as dictation, note-taking, gap-filling, summary, faulty summary to be corrected, reported commentary, or stimulus for first-person participation.

CONCLUSION

We have tried to give a brief outline of the type of written work which we require our pupils to do. Whilst not providing a panacea for successful writing, our methods are suited to our particular situation. However, it must be pointed out that these methods do not leave us without concern. The pupils' work is tightly controlled in the early stages and this might be to the detriment of "creativity". It is our ultimate aim that some of our pupils will apply the skills which they have acquired during those closely guided stages to more 'open' situations. Thus it is intended that this aspect of the language learning process will culminate in meaningful communication. We do not believe that the traditional gap-filling or the habitual pattern drill really teach. All the above exercises have proved their worth in our classrooms.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] Davies, A, ed: The Edinburgh course in applied linguistics, Vol. 3: Techniques in applied linguistics. OUP, 1974.

9. Sixth form language work

Ewen Bird

INTRODUCTION

Language is communication. At one end of the range is communication for survival, where strategies for coping at a basic level in a foreign environment are needed; at the other end of the communicative range is the expression of more elaborate needs, together with the broadening of linguistic and intellectual experience. This implies that in the sixth form language has two aspects - first, as the means by which we are aware of, and able to reach, other people; and secondly, as a means of self-expression, therefore creative. It is a mistake to think that sixth form students are incapable of creative expression in a foreign language. Working Paper 28[1] makes the point:

> 'Until we give our students the opportunity to write on their own initiative and in such a way that they come to see the close connection between language study and language use and to regard their own writing as the growing-point of their command of language, then we can have simply no idea of what they can do'.

At sixth form level, pupils' language should be adequate to escape stereotyped descriptions of banal situations, relatively unlimited by the possible restrictions of complete grammatical accuracy, which may limit the creative attempt. There is room for permissible error in sixth form language work.

It is also wrong to believe that, since topics are situated in, or related to, the foreign country, these are of no personal concern to English students. For example, in dealing with the topic of Immigration, it makes little difference whether it be a Gastarbeiter in Mannheim, Algerians in Billancourt or Asians in Bradford. The underlying problems and attitudes are very similar, and indeed by making comparisons, the teacher is fulfilling a basic justification for language teaching.

As in other subjects, we must strive to develop judgement based on empirical enquiry, and to foster the capacity for empathy in our students, as well as developing linguistic accuracy. In sixth form essays in the foreign language, although grammatical accuracy may sometimes be of a high level, there is often a paucity of ideas, as it rarely occurs to students to use ideas which they might reasonably employ in an English essay: they have never been taught to think for themselves in the foreign language. Many course books perpetuate this, especially those with a grammar-translation-prose approach which must be, by definition, linguistically prescriptive and limiting both to creativity and to the student's autonomy to choose, to follow interests, and to form opinions.

This chapter does not set out to suggest the unimportance of grammatical accuracy. Indeed, it recognises that, as the learner's needs become more elaborate, so too does the necessary grammar system; accuracy is an essential part of that system at high levels of communication. As the learner progresses, he should become more aware of the need for precise statement, and see how the sensitive use of structure and vocabulary can effect or imply meaning. What matters is not only interesting and relevant topics, but also the method of approach.

TARGETS

The students and their expectations must be considered before any discussion of teaching method. The composition of the present-day sixth form differs greatly from the traditional entry, with a much wider range of ability and background then before. Whereas previously, students were selected for sixth form study if they had achieved grade 3 or above in 'O' level, now, quite rightly, they are being accepted with a grade C or CSE grade 1. This gives rise to a wide range of attainment in any given 'A' level group. There may be students who chose a language because it fitted in well with their other subjects on the time-table, or those who wish to stay one year only. There will also be those who want to improve their language without following an 'A' level course with a literature content as specified at present. All of these may be in one group because of staffing exigencies. These students may also come from a wide social background, often with minds which are non-academic but clever. And yet, they are so often offered nothing more than the traditional fare.

It should also be remembered that students entering the sixth form sat 'O' level only eight to nine weeks before, have probably done little or no foreign language work in the meantime, and have possibly regressed since the examination. But there remain many students who, in the first week of their course, have thrust into their hands a translation from Colette, a prose passage from Hemingway and a copy of Candide which have all to be prepared by the following week!

AIMS

Since in practice, however, despite the logic of the suggestions in Working Paper No. 28, most of sixth form teaching is geared to 'A' level, this chapter is written with 'A' level students mainly in mind. Not enough time is spent on questioning what is done, and how, at this level. Four main aims, put forward eleven years ago in Working Paper 28, are worth our consideration:

(1) ability to understand speech at normal speed on non-specialist subjects

(2) ability to speak the language intelligibly to native speakers

(3) ability to read with some ease

(4) ability to write freely on topics within the student's experience.

These aims are wholly compatible with the global approach to language teaching to be put forward here, with one caveat: one cannot really talk of separate skills, since in any linguistic interaction, they are bound to be mixed together; and in teaching we cannot try to practise them separately.

APPROACHES

The underlying theory suggested here is that everything should come, in the first instance, from a direct input of the foreign language. We must start with the 'rough-hewn chunk' of language: the problem then facing teachers is how to mould and manipulate it so that it becomes the pupil's own to use in extending his or her range of expression.

We certainly do not achieve this with a translation-grammar-prose-literature approach. I see no place in the first year sixth for prose composition. In fact, I see little place for it generally in language learning. It is a contrived activity, and how often, other than preparing more proses for pupils, do linguists actually use this skill directly in expressing themselves in the foreign language? The importance and value of grammar should not, however, be under-estimated and it is probably necessary, at the beginning of the course, to revise the main grammatical structures covered up to 'O' level. A sound knowledge of grammar is needed as it gives both security and a base for further extensive work. Revision of the main grammatical structures can be done without recourse to sterile gap-filling and translation exercises, of course.

There is a general trend in language teaching at present for work in the lower and middle school to be based on a *topic approach* rather than being strictly structured, using text-books as part of a varied bank of resources rather than as a prescriptive scheme of work; the sixth form should be no exception to this. Rather than a diet of proses, translations and essays taken from some well-thumbed text-book, it is preferable, I believe, for work to be topic-based, encompassing as wide a range as possible of language, using a multi-media approach and giving practice in all language skills. Various texts from newspapers, magazines or books, tape-recordings, film-strips or transparencies, video-tape recordings, songs, all grouped around one subject, should be gathered together into a unit, giving a wide range of linguistic experience, register and style, and the possibility of various techniques of exploiting the language. Topics should be general, and one should look for those, not necessarily situated in modern times, which are pertinent to the life of a sixth former and which may extend his understanding of the world in which he lives. In Appendix 1, I give examples of such themes.

Texts

Texts should be a varied source of information and interest, taken from novels, magazines (*Nouvel Observateur*, *Paris Match*, etc), newspapers of differing viewpoints and styles (*Le Monde*, *Figaro*, *France-Soir*, *France-Dimanche*, *L'Humanité*), or from any of a wide range of text-books offering extracts of all kinds. (See appendix 2.) Recordings can be, for example, either the spoken prose of BBC Schools programmes (*Horizons de France* being at an acceptable level for first-year sixth), or assistants reading texts, or *actualité* recordings of discussions with the assistant, or recordings made while in the foreign country, or news broadcasts and interviews from radio stations such as France Inter or Europe No. 1. *Actualité* recordings play an important part in training for comprehension because in most BBC and commercial recordings the pauses, *euh*, *eh ben* and *quoi*, as well as the interruptions and cross-talk of everyday speech, are edited out, and yet these are what the student must cope with in conversation.

Videotape recordings

Videotape recordings tend to be mainly those beamed during the day for schools and, although they are often intended for the less advanced learner, can still be used with great effect at a higher level. In addition, the assistant can choose items of interest, write a question-sheet or summary in L2 on them, and then these programmes can be used as a 20-minute burst at the beginning or end of an hour-long lesson. The advantage of video-tape is that one can select, using as much or as little of a programme as one wants. It must not be forgotten, either, that a programme can be used at a number of different levels. Some programmes ostensibly aimed at third or fourth year level can also be used as a visual lead into several themes at an advanced stage. Others can be shown with the sound commentary turned down and, by requiring students to give the commentary themselves, the teacher can force quite a high degree of speed and fluency in the language. The teacher should be aware, also, of programmes shown at normal peak-viewing times which can be used as support material; and to record the odd full-length feature film in the L2 occasionally is a profitable way to spend a rainy lunch-time!

Poems and songs

Poems and songs are other, often under-used, sources of language. Wherever possible, poems linked to the themes should be included in a unit because poems are an interpretation of life, and we cannot separate literature and language; and because the precise and concise way language is used in poetic expression makes us look closely at words and structure. I believe, too, that we should be asking pupils (and not just in the sixth form) to learn poems, or parts of them by heart. This is a skill worth the practice and students can be given the autonomy to read and learn peoms of their own choosing. Songs, likewise, are useful and can also be relaxing, enjoyable and fun; they can also be used to re-inforce an emotion, a situation or grammatical structure if certain parts are judiciously blanked out and the remainder used as a gapped-text exercise.

When considering choice of material, we have to think not only of language content in terms of difficulty, vocabulary, style and register but also that our texts, whether audio, video or written, should be the starting point for further thought, discussion and role-playing. We should try to provoke the student into making interpretations, expressing opinions or emotions, weighing up facts and making decisions, analysing situations and codifying or seeking out information. Not only should the students' linguistic knowledge be extended, but also their learning on a much wider sphere. This is also good preparation for literary study and comment.

Certainly this approach makes demands on the teacher, both in finding material and in preparing work to exploit it. The teacher must continually read in the foreign language and be constantly vigilant for new topics or new items of interest to add to old topics - which is no more than a good teacher, interested in the subject, will normally be doing. The key, however, is teamwork - as it is at all levels of teaching. One teacher on his or her own cannot prepare everything necessary on a dozen units but three working together can, and the implications for departmental in-service training, especially if less experienced members of the department help, are obvious. Again, this cannot be done overnight, in a week, or even in a term. We are talking about the outcome of several years' work which is, in fact, never finished.

There must also be an efficient means of filing the units so that storage and retrieval are straightforward. In my last school, we used one section of a filing cabinet with A4 folders labelled with the unit title, e.g. logement, les jeunes, les femmes, l'environnement, etc, and relevant articles and work-sheets were put into them. At the beginning of each school year, I asked the assistant, as a first task during that 'feeling-in' period when assistants are not working to a normal time-table, to go through a pile of magazines, cut out interesting articles and put them in the corresponding folders; this saved us time and kept the folders reasonably up-to-date, with the additional advantage of giving the assistant an insight into the type of work done with the sixth form.

STRATEGIES

A term I have heard used to describe the role of the teacher at this level is that of 'facilitator', which implies a considerable change in emphasis from the traditional concept of the teacher as mainly a corrector of error, whose contact-time with the class is spent with the teacher talking and the students listening, correcting mistakes and making fair copies. As facilitator, the teacher's job is to quarry out the raw language material and to prepare means of exploitation, which the students work at in and out of contact-time, the emphasis in terms of work being thrown much more onto the student, whose role becomes that of active participant rather than that of passive listener.

I would not presume to try to make a definitive list of ways in which language can be exploited, but there follow some ploys that I have found useful and effective in teaching. I strongly believe in the value of plagiarism, acknowledging the huge debt I owe to colleagues in all I have done, and would urge those teachers who keep drawers and doors tightly shut to leave them ajar!

There seem to be three phases in the treatment of a text, although we may not necessarily want to subject every piece of language work to all three: (1) comprehension (2) exploitation (3) creation.

(1) Comprehension

Here the teacher wishes to find out how much of the text has been understood without necessarily asking the student to assimilate the language; it may be all the teacher wishes to do with some texts:

(a) Question/answer Very quickly done, either oral or written, preferably in L2.

(b) Yes-no or true-false Similar to the above, in L2, but here the use of incorrect or correct statements as opposed to straightforward questions can probe more deeply into comprehension.

(c) Résumé and note-taking Both are useful general activities to practise, either in L1 or L2, and can be used later as a basis for retelling the passage.

(d) Transference Transference of information from one mode to another for example, drawing a map of a town from a detailed description, written or oral, or completing a table showing details from a broadcast on, say, population.

(e) Classifying Where the student is required to sort out relevant information and place it under certain specified headings.

(f) Intensive listening How carefully do pupils listen? And how aware are they of intonation patterns? While listening to a text, as a language laboratory exercise, the student can mark the intonation with rising or falling arrows or, by gapping, the teacher can isolate such words as euh or eh ben.

(2) Exploitation

By this is meant that part of the work in which the teacher helps the student to learn, assimilate and develop the language of a given text:

(a) Gapped texts/transcription The text is listened to, and the students' copies have phrases, parts of or whole sentences blanked out, which they must fill in. Attention can again be focussed on specific structures, and songs lend themselves very well to this treatment. Students can be led to write a complete transcription of a text or dialogue.

(b) Cloze tests Similar in style to the above only the students do not hear the text, and on their own copies every, say, fifth, sixth, or seventh word is regularly missed out; calling on their knowledge of the language, they have to re-write the passage to make correct sense with grammatical accuracy.

(c) Re-constitution Using a text progressively gapped. The students hear the complete version, and vocabulary is explained in L2. They then see the text with, for example, all the nouns blanked out. Having filled the nouns in, they next see the passage with nouns, adjectives and adverbs omitted. This is followed by a version with nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs left out, and so on, until we may be left with a text that has only a few 'pointer' words left. This is a good exercise to do using an overhead projector where overlays can be appropriate.

(d) Cut-up texts An unseen text is given to the student which has been cut up, line by line. The student must re-arrange the strips to build up the continuous text.

(e) Internal translation Where the student is given sentences containing underlined phrases or words and has to provide synonymous words/phrases to re-write the text.

(f) Note-taking From long passage (in L2). This can also be used in reverse, the student being given the notes and having to expand them into a longer, continuous piece of writing or reporting.

(g) Awareness of style Exercises in picking out words or phrases which indicate specific things in the passage, e.g. excitement, fear, antipathy, humour. This exercise is also helpful as a preparation for literary study.

(h) Re-translation Being a good introduction to prose translation, if practise it we must. The student, having translated a passage of L2 into L1, then puts it back into L2, with the advantage of starting from the foreign language. More fruitfully, the teacher prepares a fair English version after group discussion of the original French.

(i) Dictionaries The students should be given the task of compiling their own vocabulary lists of all texts encountered for intensive work, but definitions should be written in L2. Many variations can be played on this theme, such as giving definitions in English or L2, with the students having to find the words from the passage, exercises which approximate to (e) and (h) above.

(j) Pattern practices Either written or oral in the language laboratory. These ought to be used in fairly small doses as they tend to become boring, and the learner is apt to repeat them in a mindless fashion.

(3) Creation

This is the phase when the student takes over, using the new language to create original writing or speech; the strategies can be many and varied, depending on student, situation and subject.

(a) Exchanging information With students in pairs, one having complete information and the other, by questioning, having to extract the content of the original. This can be used for a story, description, report or even with a drawing, the second student having to make his or her own drawing from information given.

(b) Adapting descriptions When the vocabulary and structure of a studied passage is used but the context is altered. For example, after reading a description of an old man, the students are required to write about an old lady they know, or to change an account of dawn in the mountains to daybreak or night-fall at sea.

(c) Role-playing Students are put into a similar situation to that in the text and allowed to work this out as they see it. For example, after studying the Gabrielle Russier affair (Enquêtes), the class was split into groups of threes (parents + son/daughter) with the latter justifying his/her choice of boy- or girl-friend in the face of parental objections. This produced situations which were clearly close to their experience!

(d) Phone-in Adapting the radio format, with some students preparing a subject and acting as the panel and others putting questions to them.

(e) Newspaper reports Where the student imagines himself to be a reporter, describing a situation studied in another context. We looked closely at 1968 and then students were given a free hand to produce an article with the headline 'Manifestation à Banbury School: Principal Enfermé dans son Bureau.' The result produced interesting ideas! And pains were taken, by using photographs and cuttings, Letraset, double-spread, etc, to make the final attempt really approximate to a newspaper.

(f) Poems I firmly believe that students can write and enjoy producing poems in the foreign language. This gives them enormous confidence and, indeed, sometimes they are liberated more in the L2 than in their mother tongue.

(g) Adapting situations Either with the person or the context. For example, having read an article from Le Nouvel Observateur on Les Eboueurs, the students were asked to write a letter to the Figaro as the wife of a dustman, supporting the strike action, or as a restaurateur condemning it. Or, taking as a starting point the text Le monsieur et le quincaillier in Choisi pour vous, to use similar language and style but taking a changed situation.

(h) Debates Forcing the student to argue from a specific point of view and needing to research in L2 to do this.

(i) Language games Such as Twenty Questions, or Charades.

(j) Essay-writing Perhaps the final phase in the sequence and practice for the 'A' level examination. The student is asked to argue for and against, to make a reasoned statement and to give an informed opinion, with such titles as L'influence de la télévision sur les jeunes or La Résistance, est-ce du terrorisme?. It is best to begin this type of work by studying an original text in L2 (question-and-answer work, cloze, etc) and to base essay work on the results of this.

Further Ploys

The above are specific exercises aimed at texts studied in some detail, but there are other ploys which one can use to sustain interest and motivation. It has always seemed odd to me that we accept without question the need for Geography and Biology field trips during term-time, without pressing for similar trips for languages. Our laboratory is, after all, the foreign country, and a week's study trip, with a ban on English and a planned programme of activities, can be most productive with a sixth form. (It is stating the obvious when I say that we should, of course, be pushing all our sixth form to take part in a family-to-family exchange sometime during their two-year course.) If we cannot get them abroad for a week, we can take them to a study centre in England, and ban English during the stay.

The language laboratory is often under-used and yet, with the older, motivated student, it can provide a wealth of linguistic experiences, especially if it is used in an ad hoc manner. We expect students of History and English to read in the library, but active language work presents a problem. So why not use the laboratory as a library? We can teach the students how to use it and switch it on, have a collection of tapes, e.g. comprehension, transcriptions, pattern drills, which they can take, and let them use it in their free study-time as they would the library, thus giving an added importance within the scheme of work to the listening skills. Languages are not just writing, even at this level.

There must be few schools that do not have a university or polytechnic within striking distance, and contacts made with institutions of Higher Education can be most fruitful. Lecturers are generally keen to come into schools to talk to sixth formers, either about courses and university life or, more specifically, about one of the set books or certain aspects of life in the foreign country. An outsider will always add another dimension. These talks can lead to reverse visits, with sixth-formers being taken round a university and going into lectures with degree students, if appropriate - and discovering that their teachers are perhaps not so boring after all! I organised in my school a full day-conference with a forum on languages and careers, followed by talks of general interest to linguists, all of which helped to broaden their views. Student teachers on teaching practice can be employed with profit, and yet are often kept at arm's length from the sixth form. Used in the class-room in small groups, student teachers can lead intensive language work, giving the teacher time to see individuals and check progress. The foreign language assistant is an obvious point of contact with the country. Besides the weekly session of structured work, an extra lunch-time, informal 'chat' session can be arranged, when pupils and assistant are able to talk freely about whatever they wish, and to make contact on a more personal level than is possible in the formal class-room.

Professor Eric Hawkins has often talked about the importance of sharing in schools, with older pupils helping the younger. This is an important concept to encourage. Sixth-formers, allocated to a first-year class for one or two periods a week, taking a small group under the guidance of the teacher, not only give much to the younger pupils, but also see that their acquired knowledge is of positive help, and that they are giving something back to the school. Similar, but different, was the participation of sixth-formers in the production of language broadcasts for local radio. They were given the outline of the programmes and asked to produce scripts, containing English and French woven naturally together, for a series intended to illustrate and reinforce Level 1 of the Oxfordshire Graded Tests syllabus, aimed at early learners or those of lesser linguistic ability. These were then tidied up and broadcast on Radio Oxford. The students found them fun to do, learnt something about broadcasting techniques and actively helped to produce materials for the younger learner, experiencing a sense of achievement and purpose.

General reading should be a priority in the sixth form, and if this can be shown to be an enjoyable activity, the students will possess in their future lives something of great value. Thus every encouragement should be given to open the world of books and literature - as opposed to the limited and generally inadequate four-set-books hurdle of the present system. It is not the intention to discuss literature in this chapter as it is discussed in the next; suffice it to say that I would greatly prefer the students to produce a folder of work showing evidence of wider reading and comprehension than the present intensive study of only four books, possibly read in translation anyway, with questions on them answered by dint of notes dictated by the teacher. A comprehensive but carefully chosen book list should be given to all students at the beginning of the course (such as those appearing in Working Paper 28) with the instruction that they are to read at least three each term chosen from this list, the emphasis being placed on gist and enjoyment. There are many ways of checking this, but I would suggest that the assistant could easily do this every three to four weeks, discussing the book in the foreign language. I append one such list as Appendix 3.

Finally, I think it is a good idea to ask all students during their 'A' level or sixth form course to compile a personal folder, containing all the passages in the foreign language which have been meaningful to them over the two years - either newspaper articles, poems, extracts from novels or even from their own or their peers' writing. When they leave, they will then have made a personal choice of writing as a record of two important years in their life; this may help to point out that an 'A' level course is not just the acquisition of a skill, but a door into an ever-widening realm of experience.

CONCLUSION

We cannot close our eyes to the fact that languages in the sixth form appears to be a declining study. If we continue to see the sixth form as the territory of the intellectual elite, with languages being taught as an exercise in grammar and logic, then we shall continue to see the decline of our subject. My premise is that languages should not be taught as a means in themselves, but as a means to an end; that language is communication, and a creative expression of experience; that students of foreign languages can get hold of the key to a rich and varied world; and that we, as teachers, must tempt them to continue to enter this world after the influence of school has waned.

APPENDIX 1

Here are some examples of units of work, showing how material from many different sources can be put together, giving variety of approach and language.

PARIS

VCR: La France, telle qu'elle est. (Series): (Paris Aujourd'hui, Paris Hier, (ITV)

Filmstrip: Capitale des Français (BBC: Radio-vision)

Tapes: Voix de France and Horizons de France (BBC)

Texts: Selected from: Grand-Clément, F and others: Choisi pour vous Heinemann, 1973. Nott, D O: Actualités françaises. Hodder & Stoughton, 1971.

Poems: Selected from Choise pour vous. (See above.)

Article: Le Nouvel Observateur. Plans for the development of Les Halles area and the Centre Pompidou.
L'Ouest-France. The opening of new section of RER by the French President.

Work to do:
- writing poems
- fitting commentary to TV film with sound turned down or to slides
- writing tourist brochures of own town and/or Paris and/or London
- transcription
- reconstitution of a text

LES JEUNES ET LA LOI

VCR: Reportage on Youth (BBC)

Tape: Horizons de France (BBC)

Text: Enquêtes: A votre avis. E J Arnold, 1975. Section on Mai '68.

Book: Various extracts from Les murs ont la parole. Wall slogans during mai '68.
Various extracts from Les barricades de mai.

Song: Qu'est-ce que tu fais dans la rue, fiston?

Article: Mainfestations estudiantines à Paris, Turin et Milan. (France-Soir). Reprinted in Rosenberg, P: Topical French. Longman, 1975, p. 78.

Work:
- intensive work in language laboratory on tape and song
- comprehension
- internal translation
- transcription
- writing newspaper reports on imaginary demonstrations at school
- essay work: role of law and order
- writing slogans à la '68

THE OCCUPATION

Text: Extract from Hiroshima, mon amour reprinted in Dunning, R and Sudre, A: La prise de la parole, Heinemann, 1972. p 45.

Article: On young Jew in the Resistance (Le Nouvel Observateur)

Tape: Voix de France (BBC)

Speech: De Gaulle: La France a perdu une bataille . . . . plus several others from record about Resistance

Realia: Collection of documents relating to the Occupation

Song: Chant de la Libération sung by Yves Montand

Poem: Liberté by Paul Eluard

Tape: Recording made in France with people who experienced the Occupation and who related their adventures

Book: Vercors: Le silence de la mer. Livre de Poche, 1953.
Kessel, J: L'Armée des Ombres. Presses Pocket, Paris, 1972.
Hawes, S and White, R, eds: Resistance in Europe 1939 - 45. Allen Lane, 1975.
Histoire de la Résistance (Que sais-je? series)

Film: Lacombe Lucien.

Booklets: Various from the Bibliothèque de travail series
Guide to the Musée de la Résistance at Grenoble

Work:
- role-playing i.e. crossing the 'ligne de démarcation'; discussion/justification between former resistant and collaborator, etc.
- summaries in L1 and L2
- writing newspaper reports
- writing a short dramatic extract to be taped and played back, or taping imaginary radio interviews based on facts gained by reading
- transcription/comprehension in the language laboratory

IMMIGRATION

VCR: Etranges Etrangers (BBC Reportage)

Texts: Selected from Prise de la Parole and Actualités Françaises. (See above.)

Tape: Voix de France (BBC)

Book: Etcherelli, C: Elise ou la vraie vie. Gallinard, Paris, 1977.

Article: Le Nouvel Observateur: Les Eboueurs: 20 ans dans les poubelles.

Poem: Nougara, C: Armstrong. Reprinted in Nott, D O: Actualités françaises. Part 2. Hodder & Stoughton, 1978.

Work:
- role-playing, e.g. phone-in programme on immigration
- letters to newspapers
- summaries of articles in L1 and L2
- transcription and internal translation in the language laboratory
- descriptions of, e.g. demonstrations against National Front or Notting Hill Carnival
- essay work

APPENDIX 2

This is a list of language sources, useful books, magazines and records, that I have found useful at one time or another. Most of the books are available in this country, but a number of the records come from France and would be difficult to obtain here, although they are readily available across the Channel.

BOOKS

Biggs, P and M Dalwood: Les Orleanais ont la parole. Longman, 1976.

Blanc, M: Visages de la France contemporaine. Harrap, 1969.

Chapman, R de C: Le français contemporain. Harrap, 1971-75.

Dunning, R and A Sudre: La prise de la parole. Heinemann, 1972.

Hellström, S-G et al: On parle français. Heinemann, Book 3, 1971.

Hellström, S-G et al: Choisi pour vous. Heinemann, 1973.

Hunt, C and J M Rice: Vous avez bien compris? Hodder & Stoughton, 1978.

James, C D, ed: Twentieth century French reader. Pergamon, 1965.

Lee, S and D Ricks, eds: Penguin French reader. Penguin, 1968.

Matthes, D and K: Aspects de la vie. Edward Arnold, 1977.

Murphy, P, ed: D'un peu partout. Macmillan, 1976.

Nott, D O and J E Trickey: Actualities françaises. Hodder & Stoughton. Book 1. 1971. Book 2, 2nd edition, 1976.

Packham, B L and P Carrington: Advanced multiple-choice tests in French. Hodder & Stoughton, 1976.

Paoletti, M: Civilisation française contemporaine. Hatier, Paris 1977.

Rosenberg, P: Topical French. Longman, 1975.

Roussier, G: Lettres de prison. Seuil, Paris, 1973.

Schools Council: Modern Languages Project: Enquêtes: A votre avis extra. E J Arnold, 1975.

10. The sixth form: 'A' level literature

David Smith

At a meeting concerned with teaching French literature to the sixth form held in 1979, the teachers present gave a list of twenty nine titles ranging from 17th to 20th Century as the list of set books which, between them, they were teaching for the 'A' level examination. These included such widely differing styles of books as Barboche and Les femmes savantes with examples from each of the 17th-20th century. Such a list makes it difficult to talk about 'the set book'. Teaching Britannicus, for instance, presents different problems from teaching Pagnol's La gloire de mon père. When asked why they were teaching literature, teachers gave the following reasons:

(1) Literature is on the syllabus.

(2) Studying literature in the sixth form helps when pupils go to university.

(3) The study of literature helps pupils to understand themselves, and to understand the culture of the foreign country.

(4) The study of literature helps sixth form language work.

There may be other reasons than these, but let us examine each of them in a little more detail.

(1) Literature is on the syllabus.

This is incontrovertibly true, although there are strong reasons for believing that its presence on the syllabus serves to discourage some capable pupils from opting to go on to 'A' level; high competence in a foreign language at 'O' level does not necessarily imply an interest in foreign literature. Literature is on the syllabus mainly for historical reasons, related to decisions taken in the 19th century, throughout Europe, about the content of the secondary school curriculum.

In France and Germany these decisions lead to the common integrated syllabus, whose principles are still in force, whereas in England the preference was for pupils to study one 'noble subject'. In France and Germany today more emphasis is laid on the light which a work throws on the country, with pupils' work often based on extracts. The pre-examination year gives a broader, more superficial perspective of literature, followed by a purely language examination, although the oral examination may well include reference in the foreign language to foreign authors read.

(2) Does literature help at university?

Not all those who study languages at 'A' level wish to go to university. Some chose their language as their third 'make-weight' subject.

(3) Does the study of literature help pupils to understand themselves, and to understand the foreign country better?

If so, certain types of teaching are probably needed, some of which I outline later. For the moment, suffice it to say that teachers need to define exactly how, for instance, the study of two seventeenth-century and two nineteenth-century texts illuminates the culture of modern France, or exactly how the study of, for instance, the songs of Georges Brassens helps students to understand themselves.

(4) Does the study of literature help sixth form language study?

It is not immediately self-evident how the study of seventeenth-century poetic drama helps with extended discourse in, or writing of, twentieth-century French. In fact, some evidence quoted later from first-year university undergraduates suggests that this is not always the case.

* * *

Most pupils entering the sixth form have little experience of literature. Their reading in English has often been of an escapist variety. They may have studied some books in class in English lessons in the lower and middle school. They may have read some books - probably specially written 'readers' - in their foreign language course before 'O' level. Some may have opted to study two foreign languages at 'A' level, and some may have opted to study English at 'A' level. For many, however, the only contact within school with 'serious literature' will be in their single foreign-language option.

It appears common to begin the set books early in the lower sixth form course, at which stage many pupils find the length of the works frightening and the level of the language beyond them. This often leads to literature being taught 'in ways which negate the very principles of education; rote translation into English; force-feeding of language and ideas; dictation of pre-digested ideas for those - the majority - who are not yet sufficiently mature to absorb them'.[1] Evidence suggests that there is a great deal of truth in such criticisms, and there may be a strong case for at least making the literature component optional, and making a reinforced language-only option available. However, the present chapter seeks to suggest ways in which teachers can approach the teaching of literature in the syllabuses which at present exist.

In the comments by teachers quoted at the beginning of this chapter, language development was said to go hand in hand with increasing understanding of the foreign country and with helping the adolescent student to understand himself better. Let us now re-examine these three points in reverse order.

(1) Literature and personal development

Frank Corless has a helpful comment from the German critic Iser on this point:

> 'Literature simulates life, not in order to portray it, but in order to allow the reader to share in it. He can step out of his own world and get into another, where he can experience extremes of pleasure and pain without being involved in any consequences whatsoever . . . Precisely because the literary text makes no objectively real demand on its readers, it opens up a freedom that everyone can interpret in his own way. Thus with every text, we learn not only about what we are reading, but also about ourselves'.[1] (p.164)

With this statement in mind, we can define certain strategies for teaching literature if it is to help with personal development:

(1) The study of literature is not one allowing of a small set of correct answers universally applicable. It depends on personal reaction. Because each individual has his own make-up, with his own ambitions, fears, loves and hates, personal reactions can be expected to be varied. Reactions can be expected to become more considered as the individual is subjected to wider experience, which gives him more reliable measures against which to gauge his reactions. To prevent immature reactions and potentially ill-considered conclusions, the teacher needs to feed in adequate material for comparison - in this case, other works of literature, and other relevant creative forms, which might include musical or artistic creations (paintings, photographs, sculpture, drama).

(2) This means that pupils must read much more than their set books. It suggests that the set books should be started as late as possible, with the lower sixth form year used for massive reading of all kinds, as preparation for the close study of four or five set books later. Pupils need to read other works by the same author, other works on similar themes, or with other related features by other authors. In some cases - as in the French or German pattern - extracts may be enough. Students must be encouraged to give their own reactions after their reading, but all assertions about an author must be supported by firm evidence, preferably textual.

(3) This necessitates that pupils should be able to read easily, and this will not be the case unless they have been given plenty of time and material to read in the lower and middle school.

(4) It also has relevance to the choice of set books to be selected, as personal reaction is potentially fuller and easier in some cases than in others. Some authors are simply easier to read than others, and some titles are easier to read than other titles by the same author.

(5) Fuller reaction to a work of literature may be possible when the reader has already attempted literary creation himself. It is not difficult to encourage English pupils to write poetry in French. I have done this with fourth and

fifth year pupils in a comprehensive school, based on reading with them of poems by Verlaine, Prevert, Queneau and Apollinaire. Great poetry did not result, but pupils did try to use French for varied effects, which is the beginning of an understanding of what is involved in literary creation.[2]

(6) If the pupil is to develop an adequate yardstick in the form of personal literary experience, he can form this partly by reading in English, both in the form of works by British and American authors, and in the form of translations from other languages, including both his main foreign language and others. If we are studying Horace it would be interesting to see how Shakespeare, Goethe, Cervantes and others present heroism, and how, in different media, David and Beethoven do so. Ted Neather suggests that by comparing translations with originals, students may learn a great deal about stress, redundancy, phonetic differences, choice of words. In quoting George Steiner, he points out that pupils need to appreciate that 'there are no total translations, no meshing of nets so precise that there is identity of conceptual content, unison of undertone, absolute symmetry of aural and visual association.[3]

(2) Literature as illuminator of the foreign culture

As literature is produced by people who have lived their lives in the foreign country, it is assumed that study of their writing will give insights into aspects of the culture of the country, both through the events portrayed and the social contexts in which they are set. Sometimes the work is a direct description of the context: more often than not, it is to some extent allegorical. Fruitful discussion (among cognoscenti rather than pupils) might result from the question whether Racine's drama actually says much about 17th century France. It is certainly arguable, however, that most sixth formers are probably more interested in contemporary France, and that their early contacts with French literature should be modern rather than classical. In this way they can more easily make links between their own experience and the world portrayed, which is the basis of their benefiting in developmental terms themselves from the study of literature. What approaches are appropriate here?

(a) In the past, teachers have tended to give far too many facts about the author and the society of his day. In many cases, details of his life are irrelevant, as are often many of the other details given in introductions to set texts. The teacher does need to give a few facts which pupils might not otherwise appreciate. When approaching a text by Camus, some brief idea of his philosophy is necessary. When preparing to study La symphonie pastorale (Gide), for example, it is essential to play a recording of Beethoven's symphony. Works by other composers might also be proposed (e.g. Vivaldi, Delius).

(b) In some cases, other facts which the teacher may need to obtain from source books are important. In this case, pupils or pairs of pupils should be left to obtain the information for themselves, and to prepare a factual paper, preferably in the foreign language, with the teacher restricting himself to suggesting topics and sources. When they present the paper to their colleagues, the teacher may intervene or add material if appropriate. A few facts about Oran and photographs of it may be valuable before reading *La peste* (Camus), about the Alps before reading *Premier de cordée* (Frison Roche), about the Front Populaire before reading *325,000 francs* (Vailland).

(c) Additionally, the foreign *assistant* can be asked to provide a brief factual taped or printed version in the foreign language for language study, which will also prepare students for study of the set work, e.g. some idea of the Church-versus-State tradition in France before reading Pagnol's *La gloire de mon père*, some language work on the French colonies before study of *L'étranger* (Camus).

(d) Wherever possible, film and slide evidence relevant to the work should be provided. Pagnol means more when students know what Provence looks like, and when they have smelt its herbs. The famous film version of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* adds incalculably to its effect compared to a simple reading of the text. Fernandel's recording of *Lettres de mon moulin* (Daudet) can bring the text to life a little (especially if previous work has included an appreciation of, or at least a recognition of, regional accents).

3. Literary texts and language work

Michael Holland* studied the language work of his first-year university undergraduates and found certain deficiencies in it, attributable at least in part, to the way they had been taught at school. For instance, he found items absent which might have been expected to be there. There was a very poor range of conjunctions, with students using almost only *et* and *mais*, and only rarely any of the possible alternatives available. Although they knew *donner* and *voir*, they never volunteered items like *accorder*, *fournir*, *constater*, *affirmer*. However, Holland did find items which should not have been there. Many of these he attributes to the undue influence of literature. For instance, *pouvoir* and *savoir* were to be found with *ne*, but never followed by *pas*. The past tense of *être* was always given as its imperfect and never as its perfect form. Frequently, *entendre* was used instead of *comprendre*.

Holland's conclusion is that the language of his first year undergraduates was 'entirely dominated by the subjective language of the egocentric situation'. They were not able to operate in the realm of abstract and objective discourse. Holland describes three levels of language: the subjective, the objective, the creative, which develop within the learner in that order, and gradually. According to his research, *even second-year university students* were poor at producing the creative level of language use. As they had been exposed to the creative language of great authors since the beginning of their sixth form course, this should make us wonder whether the effect of literary study on language study is invariably as great as is imagined.

If literary texts are to have the impact on language development which teachers suppose, then good portions of the language work must be based on, or derived from, the set works. This seems almost comically self-evident. However, in order for literary study to be worthwhile, at least four points are essential:

(1) Pupils must be able to understand the great bulk of the language of the works studied. There are basically three types of literature - the narrative, the dramatic and the poetic. In the earlier part of the course, it is important to choose texts which can be dealt with at the level of simple recording or reporting (i.e. basically narrative). It may be necessary to return to them later to deal with them from the viewpoint of more theoretical generalisation. Some works may not need such treatment anyway.

Some evidence (H.T. Mason[5]) suggests that good numbers of first-year undergraduates are able to deal adequately with little more than straightforward narrative text. This might well be so, therefore, for those foreign-language sixth formers who will never read French at university. Ideally, texts would repeat examples of structures which pupils need to internalise: this would seem to be a good reason for avoiding texts with archaic structures.

(2) Texts must be potentially interesting to pupils, to allow them to enter into the events and emotions displayed, and to become involved as participatory onlookers. Interest is difficult to predict. At first, at least, a strong story line seems important, with additionally the possibility of '*participation affective*', gratuitous involvement in the pleasure and pain of the protagonists, with the comforting knowledge of being able to withdraw at any stage, without personal consequences.

(3) Pupils must be brought to the level where they can appreciate the style of the author, moving from the simple narrative towards the more idiosyncratic. Style is deceptive. *La Symphonie Pastorale*, clear and sharp in every detail, is written in a most elevated style of language, inappropriate for spoken use. *Regain*, heavily colloquial, is very difficult at times. Appreciation of style is only possible when students are already aware of what constitutes the 'common core of language',[6] what is publicly used, and thus in what ways the specimen studied differs from it. The first task is thus clearly to build up this common core of language. An additional stage of complexity is reached when pupils need to consider factors such as the cinematic technique of Anouilh in *Beckett*, where the dramatic style depends on more than language.

(4) Set texts must allow pupils to use their own foreign language to talk about them. Far from the word-for-word translation with talk in English about the work, which has long characterised the teaching of literature, discussion in the foreign language should be the first reaction of teachers and pupils alike. No doubt English will be needed at times, not least for the writing of essays: but *writing* in English does not necessarily imply previous *speaking* in English. If we compare even very good 'O' level essays with the simplest pages of French literature, there is a difference. Vast amounts of raw material are needed to bring even the very best 'O' level pupils to the stage where they can express their own views and feelings - even to the relatively easy extent of being able to use (both linguistically and conceptually) items such as '*il me semble que Flaubert dit cela parce que* . . .'

The rest of this chapter is devoted to giving ten examples of ways in which set texts can be used to increase language competence. All the examples are taken from work done recently in class on set books which appeared on various 'A' level syllabuses. The principle behind the approaches suggested is twofold: 1) Close attention to the text can lead to linguistic development. 2) It also forces that concentration on the text which is essential for answering the essay questions. If 'purple passages' are chosen wherever possible, it is difficult to understand why English needs to be used very much at all. Equally, by using short passages of this kind, teachers can quietly introduce segments of the set works earlier in the course, without as yet the need for the whole work to be ploughed through. (The extracts given are all rather shorter than would be used in class, for reasons of space.)

Strategy One

Pupils should read widely in the lower sixth, with a class library available. Periodically they should summarise the story briefly in the foreign language (a) orally for classmates, (b) in writing for teacher. Wherever possible, they should also give personal reactions, e.g. '*je n'ai pas voulu terminer ce livre parce que* . . .'

Strategy Two

An extract is given from a set book for language work, before the set book is begun, and students are invited to fill the gaps with any appropriate words. The original item is made available subsequently.

> J'ai diné chez Céleste. J'avais déjà manger lorsqu'il est
> une bizarre petite femme qui m'a si elle pouvait
> à ma table. Naturellement, elle le pouvait. Elle des
> gestes saccadés et des yeux brillants dans une petite de pomme.
> Elle s'est de sa jaquette, s'est assise et fiévreusement
> la carte. Elle a Céleste et a immédiatement tous ses
> plats d'une à la fois précise et précipitée. En les hors-
> d'œuvre, elle a ouvert son sac, en a un petit carré de
> et un crayon, a fait d'avance l'addition, puis a tiré d'un gousset, augmentée
> du pourboire, la somme exacte qu'elle a devant elle. A ce
> , on lui a des hors-d'œuvre qu' a engloutis à
> vitesse. Camus: *L'étranger*.

Strategy Three

An extract from a set book is studied for language work before the set book is begun, using a brainstorming technique. The teacher reads the text clearly to the class, and asks the pupils to give back any words or phrases they recall from the reading. The teacher writes these on the board, seeking refinement where appropriate, and the pupils reconstitute the text. The teacher distributes the original version. There follows a discussion of difference, and an examination of important language: word families, homonyms, synonyms: 'Find me the word that means ....'; 'Make up another sentence using that word!' Pupils write their own version for homework, using pieces of the original if appropriate.

> La porte de la rue est ouverte tout le jour. Le soir, elle se referme avec un bruit caverneux et les gens disent le mot de passe avant de trébucher sur les degrés. Dans sa partie inférieure, l'escalier est obscur, même au fort de la belle saison. Un papillon de gaz y languit.
>
> L'escalier est de bois. On a dû le cirer au début des temps et, par la suite, se contenter de le brosser à l'eau de Javel: il passe quand même trop de monde. Quand, avec le poing bien serré, on donne un coup sur la rampe, une longue vibration la saisit et s'envole jusqu'au ciel.
>
> L'escalier monte, monte, à travers des familles et des familles superposées comme des couches géologiques. On entend ici une mandoline, là un petit chien qui jappe, à droite le poitrinaire qui respire avec tant de peine. Et, déjà, c'est la grosse dame à l'éternelle chanson: 'Je t'aime, comprends-tu ce mot?' Et le tap . . . tap . . . du monsieur qui travaille chez lui à des choses incompréhensibles. Et, partout, les machines à coudre et des piétinements d'enfants dans les couloirs, et des voix d'hommes et de femmes qui parlent et se querellent à propos des affaires de leur clan.
>
> Duhamel: Le notaire du Havre

Strategy Four

An extract for internal translation. The pupils replace the underlined phrases (in class, then for homework) with appropriate alternatives, giving the nearest approximation to the original meaning.

> Monsieur le Baron était un des plus puissants seigneurs de la Westphalie, car son château avait des portes et des fenêtres. Sa grand salle était même ornée d'une tapisserie . . . . Ils l'appelaient tous Monseigneur, et ils riaient quand il faisait des contes.
>
> Madame la Baronne, qui pesait environ trois cent cinquante livres, s'attirait par là une très grande considération . . . Sa fille Cunégonde, âgée de dix-sept ans, était haute en couleur, fraîche, grasse, appétissante . . . Le précepteur Pangloss était l'oracle de la maison, et le petit Candide écoutait ses leçons avec toute la bonne foi de son âge et de son caractère.
>
> Voltaire: Candide.

Strategy Five

In this example, all the suggested exercises could be done on the same text. Pupils might find it less boring, however, to use different extracts for each type of exercise.

(a) The extract (in its original, past historic form) is used as a basis for intensive oral question and answer work, in the perfect tense.

(b) A brief summary of events is produced orally.

(c) Those words in the original which contribute to its humour are isolated.

(d) Pupils retell in the perfect tense form, as though they were Cunégonde.

(e) The teacher prepares a faulty summary of the original, and the pupils correct it (original not visible).

> Un jour, Cunégonde, en se promenant auprès du château, dans le petit bois qu'on appelle parc, vit entre les broussailles le docteur Pangloss qui donnait une leçon de physique expérimentale à la femme de chambre de sa mère, petite brune très jolie et très docile ..... Elle s'en retourna toute agitée, toute pensive, toute remplie du désir d'être savante ....
>
> Elle rencontra Candide en revenant au château, et rougit; Candide rougit aussi; elle lui dit bonjour d'une voix entrecoupée, et Candide lui parla sans savoir ce qu'il disait. Le lendemain, après le dîner, comme on sortait de table, Cunégonde et Candide se trouvèrent derrière un paravent; Cunégonde laissa tomber son mouchoir, Candide le ramassa; elle lui prit innocemment la main, le jeune homme baisa innocemment la main de la jeune demoiselle avec une vivacité, une sensibilité, une grâce toute particulière; leurs bouches se rencontrèrent, leurs yeux s'enflammèrent, leurs genoux tremblèrent, leurs mains s'engagèrent. M. le Baron de T. passa près du paravent, et chassa Candide du château à grands coups de pied dans le derrière; Cunégonde s'évanouit; elle fut souffletée par Madame la Baronne dès qu'elle fût revenue à elle-même. Voltaire: Candide.

Strategy Six

The text is in reported speech. The pupils produce a direct-speech version in class, and a written version for homework, with phrases linking up the dialogue. The teacher and assistant record an agreed version of this (which will still be close to original in style). They also record a more realistic, colloquial version of the dialogue. The two versions are compared in class. In class, or in the language laboratory if possible, the colloquial version is listened to with care until pupils can also produce this dialogue orally. This version is then written up alongside their original effort.

> Le soir, Marie est venue me chercher et m'a demandé si je voulais me marier avec elle. J'ai dit que cela m'était égal et que nous pourrions le faire si elle le voulait. Elle a voulu savoir alors si je l'aimais. J'ai répondu comme je l'avais déjà fait une fois, que cela ne signifiait rien mais que sans doute je ne l'aimais pas. 'Pourquoi m'épouser alors?' a-t-elle dit. Je lui ai expliqué que cela n'avait aucune importance et que si elle le désirait, nous pouvions nous marier. D'ailleurs, c'était elle qui le demandait et moi je me contentais de dire oui. Elle a observé alors que le mariage était une chose grave. J'ai répondu: 'Non.' Elle s'est tue un moment et elle m'a regardé en silence. Puis elle a parlé. Elle voulait simplement savoir si j'aurais accepté la même proposition venant d'une autre femme, à qui je serais attaché de la même façon. J'ai dit: 'Naturellement.' Elle s'est demandé alors si elle m'aimait et moi, je ne pouvais rien savoir sur ce point. Après un autre moment de silence, elle a murmuré que j'étais bizarre, qu'elle m'aimait sans doute à cause de cela mais que peut-être un jour je la dégoûterais pour les mêmes raisons. Comme je me taisais, n'ayant rien à ajouter, elle m'a pris le

bras en souriant et elle a déclaré qu'elle voulait se marier avec moi. J'ai répondu que nous le ferions dès qu'elle le voudrait. Camus: L'étranger.

Strategy Seven

This is a more difficult version of 6, as the reported speech is much more wrapped up in original text. The same exercises as in 6 are used to reconstitute the dialogue. (The story of the lost sheep is extracted from the Bible (St Luke, Chapter 15, St Matthew, Chapter 18) in the English version and in the French version. The French version contains many examples of the subjunctive, which are studied.)

- Qu'est-ce que tu as l'intention de faire de ça? reprit-elle après que la petite fut installée.

Mon âme frissonna en entendant l'emploi de ce neutre et j'eus peine à maîtriser un mouvement d'indignation.

- Je ramène la brebis perdue, dis-je avec le plus de solennité que je pus.

Puis, comme ma femme restait encore interdite et un peu exaspérée, me semblait-il, par la présence de l'intruse:

- Tu peux parler devant elle, ajoutai-je; la pauvre enfant ne comprend pas.

Alors Amélie commença de protester que certainement elle n'avait rien à me dire, - ce qui est le prélude habituel des plus longues explications, - et qu'elle n'avait qu'à se soumettre comme toujours à ce que je pouvais inventer de moins pratique et de plus contraire à l'usage et au bon sens.

Puis elle déclara que j'allais toujours de l'avant sans jamais m'inquiéter de la résistance de ceux qui suivent, que pour sa part elle estimait que cinq enfants suffisaient, que depuis la naissance de Claude elle en avait 'son compte' et qu'elle se sentait à bout.

Je suppliai très doucement Amélie d'examiner si à ma place elle n'eût pas agi de même et s'il lui eût été possible de laisser dans la détresse un être qui manifestement n'avait plus sur qui s'appuyer.

Gide: La Symphonie Pastorale.

St Luke 15

3 AND he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

Chapitre XV

Mais il leur proposa cette parabole:

Qui est l'homme d'entre vous, qui ayant cent brebis, s'il en perd un ne laisse les quatre-vingt-dix-neuf au désert, et n'aille après celui qui est perdue, jusqu'à ce qu'il l'ait trouvée; et qui, l'ayant trouvée, ne la mette sur

> ses épaules avec joie; et, étant arrivé dans la maison n'appelle ses amis et ses voisins et ne leur dise: Réjouissez-vous avec moi, car j'ai trouvé ma brebis qui était perdue?

Strategy Eight

The extract is used for class translation into English, and the pupils write it up for homework. The teacher prepares his own version. Without seeing the original, the foreign assistant is given this English version for translation into French, with the class observing and taking notes. This version is compared to the original. The teacher and the assistant discuss the differences, involving the class where possible. The pupils then write their own prose version for homework (original no longer visible).

> A première vue, en effet, Joseph Grand n'était rien de plus que le petit employé de mairie dont il avait l'allure. Long et maigre, il flottait au milieu de vêtements qu'il choisissait toujours trop grands, dans l'illusion qu'ils lui feraient plus d'usage. S'il gardait encore la plupart de ses dents sur les gencives inférieures, il avait perdu en revanche celles de la mâchoire supérieure. Son sourire, qui relevait surtout la lèvre du haut, lui donnait ainsi une bouche d'ombre. Si l'on ajoute à ce portrait une démarche de séminariste, l'art de raser les murs et de se glisser dans les portes, un parfum de cave et de fumée, toutes les mines de l'insignifiance, on reconnaîtra que l'on ne pouvait pas l'imaginer ailleurs que devant un bureau, appliqué à réviser les tarifs des bains-douches de la ville ou à réunir pour un jeune rédacteur les éléments d'un rapport concernant la nouvelle taxe sur l'enlèvement des ordures ménagères. Même pour un esprit non prévenu, il semblait avoir été mis au monde pour exercer les fonctions discrètes mais indispensables d'auxiliaire municipal temporaire à soixante-deux francs trente par jour.
>
> Camus: La Peste.

Strategy Nine

Officialese: The pupils prepare the text at home, so that the meaning is clear. The assistant and the teacher, with the class observing and asking questions, prepare a poster in 'official' language, as close as possible to the original. The pupils then use this poster to explain to a friend in everyday language what the new regulations mean (original version no longer visible).

> L'exorde de l'arrêté annonçait, en effet, que quelques cas d'une fièvre pernicieuse, dont on ne pouvait encore dire si elle était contagieuse, avaient fait leur apparition dans la commune d'Oran. Ces cas n'étaient pas assez caractérisés pour être réellement inquiétants et il n'y avait pas de doute que la population saurait garder son sang-froid. Néanmoins, et dans un esprit de prudence qui pouvait être compris par tout le monde, le préfet prenait quelques mesures préventives. Comprises et appliquées comme elles devaient l'être, ces mesures étaient de nature à arrêter net toute menace d'épidémie. En conséquence, le préfet ne doutait pas un instant que ses administrés n'apportassent la plus dévouée des collaborations à son effort personnel.

> L'affiche annonçait ensuite des mesures d'ensemble, parmi lesquelles une dératisation scientifique par injection de gaz toxiques dans les égouts et une surveillance étroite de l'alimentation en eau. Elle recommandait aux habitants le plus extrême propreté et invitait enfin les porteurs de puces à se présenter dans les dispensaires municipaux. D'autre part, les familles devaient obligatoirement déclarer les cas diagnostiqués par le médecin et consentir à l'isolement de leurs malades dans les salles spéciales de l'hôpital. Ces salles étaient d'ailleurs équipées pour soigner les malades dans le minimum de temps et avec le maximum de chances de guérison. Quelques articles supplémentaires soumettaient à la désinfection obligatoire la chambre du malade et le véhicule de transport. Pour le reste, on se bornait à recommander aux proches de se soumettre à une surveillance sanitaire.
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> Camus: La Peste.

Strategy Ten

Newspaper report. Text studied: Premier de cordée. The teacher gathers newspaper articles in French describing mountain accidents. These are discussed at the time of study of the set book. The pupils, the teacher and the assistant prepare an article on the accident and the background to it, using journalistic style as far as possible. Pupils then write their own newspaper account for homework.

CONCLUSION

It is not suggested that all set books can be used for language work of these kinds. It *is* suggested that set books which lend themselves to language development and for which many other types of exercise are possible, fit most easily into the type of course where it is hoped that language competence will increase as a result of literary study.

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